

BOMBERS ACROSS

By

Captain Edgar J. Wynn

AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND

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BOMBERS ACROSS



A WARTIME BOOK

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MENT'S REGULATIONS FOR CONSERVING
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Capt. Edgar J. Wynn at the controls of a B-24
Liberator bomber.

To June



and to the
wives and sweethearts
of all airmen. "They also serve, who
only stand and wait."

(Photo by *Wolkonsky*)

BOMBERS ACROSS

A decorative graphic consisting of three horizontal wavy lines. The right side of these lines is filled with a dense pattern of small dots, which extends slightly beyond the lines themselves.

CAPTAIN EDGAR J. WYNN

Illustrated with Photographs and a Map

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FIRST EDITION

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Introduction

THERE are more unsung heroes fighting in this war, I suppose, than in all the other wars of history rolled together. Explorers who have gone into remote regions in search of rare minerals and products of the jungle; men in the intelligence services who in this war have an infinitely more difficult job than ever before; paratroopers dropped behind the lines whom we never hear about; war correspondents who have suffered more casualties in proportion to their numbers than any other single group taking an active part at the various fronts; doctors, nurses, stretcher bearers, and ambulance drivers for whom the hazards are now far greater than ever; ground crews at advance air bases, and so on. The list is endless. But right at the head of it should go the flyers whose job it is to ferry planes across the oceans, and fly the endless stream of munitions that go by the sky route.

Frankly, I feel utterly inadequate for the pleasant task of writing a preliminary word to this exciting book. But, I accepted the invitation eagerly, because there are few things that could give me more satisfaction than the opportunity to salute the lads who fly the oceans. For, from my observer's seat, it seems that they have had far less recognition than they deserve.

My actual knowledge of the men who fly the seven seas and span the continents on their errands of war is less than I would like it to be. However, for years I have been either directly or indirectly associated with the world of aviation, and scores of my friends are among the old-time flyers who were the first to join the Ferry Command.

And while I think of it, here's a question that has been puzzling me ever since we entered the war:

One of the top flyers of our time, is a young old man named Clyde Pangborn. There are some who rank him Number One.

His round-the-world flight long years ago was just one of his endless string of achievements. And in this was included a record that still stands; when he made man's first non-stop flight right across the vast Pacific Ocean. And, the amazing thing is that it has never been flown non-stop since. Where is "Pang" now? Why, he's a Captain in the RAF Ferry Command.

Some of the most interesting flights that I have ever made have been with the pilots who are now spanning the hemispheres. And never will I forget that night at Natal, at the tip of the South American bulge, the Number One jumping off place for the men who fly the South Atlantic. Air Force General Bob Walsh, in command there, suggested that we stay up all night, sit in with the veteran pilots—and the youngsters too—at their "briefing"; then see them into their planes; and watch them vanish over the South Atlantic.

Occasionally the flyers and ground crews needed a little extra man power to clear a path through the rows and rows of four-engined and twin-engined bombers lined up there and waiting to make the long jump to Africa—some to take it straight, others to make it by way of lonely Ascension Island. Sometimes the General and I supplied that extra man power.

All through the night a steady stream of planes, with blue flames shooting from their exhausts, went roaring down the more-than-a-mile-long-runway, up into the darkness, and out over the Atlantic bound for Africa, Asia, and Far Countries.

One of the Air Transport pilots, a young Frenchman who now has rolled up several thousand hours in over-ocean flying, told me a story of one of his Pacific experiences. Some years ago when the Chilean government decided to create a ski corps for patrol work in the high Andes, Blue Devil Jacques Charmoz and a fellow French Olympic skier were loaned by the government of France to Chile, to train the Chilean Army. When this war broke out, Charmoz decided to return home as a flyer, rather than as a Chasseur Alpin. But his country was overrun before

he could get home. So he came north from Chile, bought his own plane, and at his own expense and with indefatigable labor, piled up hours at night flying, studied all types of navigation, and finally talked the RAF into taking him. In fact, today he and five others are the only French airmen in the trans-oceanic flying game.

Later, when Uncle Sam was desperately in need of experienced airmen to fly bombers across the Pacific, Captain Jacques Charmoz of the RAF for a time was loaned to the American Army Air Forces. In addition to flights back and forth across the Pacific, he made some eighteen trips rushing Commandos from Australia to New Guinea. That was when the Japs had crossed the Owen-Stanley Mountains, and were threatening to take Port Moresby.

On his way back from one trip to the Antipodes he and another RAF captain were invited to return as passengers in a twin-engined cargo ship. They didn't relish the idea, because they knew the plane had a fuel capacity that would allow only for an extremely narrow margin of safety on some of those big Pacific jumps. But, it was hot as blazes in New Caledonia, and there was no telling when another plane would be heading toward America. So, they decided to go along.

All went well until they were on the lap between Canton Island and Hawaii. This, by the way, was right at the time when Captain Eddie Rickenbacker and his companions were down somewhere on the Pacific, and every surface ship and plane that could be spared was taking part in the search.

In that cargo plane with Jacques Charmoz and his pal there was a third passenger, a distinguished officer, making the trip in a long wooden box. That coffin occupied so much of the space that the two French officers had to use it as the table when they dined. And they played gin rummy across it.

After flying for some hours on that Canton-Hawaii lap, Jacques figured that the plane must be nearly out of fuel, and

seeing no sign of any islands he went up to the cockpit and asked the captain how they were getting on. The young American pilot shook his head, said he didn't know, in fact wasn't sure when they would make a land-fall, but that undoubtedly the navigator had them on the beam.

Next Captain Charmoz asked the navigator if he knew where they were, and the latter replied that he was working on it, but was uncertain. However, he said he was sure the radio operator, who seemed awfully busy, must be in touch with Hawaii. When Charmoz tried to question the radio man, the latter waved him aside. So, he went back and continued the game of cards across the coffin. More time passed, and by now he was dead certain the fuel tanks must be almost empty. So, he went over to the radio man who was still busy, determined to wait this time until he found out. After a few minutes the wireless operator threw up his hands and shouted joyfully: "They've found him! They've found him!"

All the time he had been listening to the radio conversations that just about blanketed the Central Pacific, wireless messages in connection with the search for Rickenbacker—who at that moment had been found.

But, the rejoicing radio operator didn't know the position of his own plane! While he was cheering the rescue of Captain Rickenbacker and his companions, he himself, and those with him, were lost!

The story, of course, had a happy ending. They made it by an eyelash. A few minutes later, just as they ran out of gas, they sighted one of the islands of the Hawaiian group.

There are endless untold tales of high adventure to be related by the young airmen who have been ferrying bombers to all parts of the planet. Surely no greater saga could be written than the story of their flights. And now here is Captain Edgar J. Wynn, one of this gallant company, who has a thrilling and heroic tale to tell.

LOWELL THOMAS

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BOMBERS ACROSS

Chapter

1

You might call us the irregulars of the second World War. We fought for three years without uniforms, except for washed-out felt hats, cowboy boots, business suits, faded red shirts and oil-streaked leather jackets. No medals, citations or any other variety of glory went with the job. There was only one unvarying order of the day: to ferry the planes of war from America's production lines to our allies in every corner of the world.

We were ferry pilots and crewmen, and damn proud of it.

Before the government issued uniforms in 1942, the initiated could spot a ferry pilot anywhere. There was a certain cockiness about him, an aura of superiority. Invariably, he was buying something—a star sapphire in Karachi, India; a crude knife from some native in Lagos, on the west coast of Africa; a camel-skin hassock to cast a weird fragrance over some lucky girl's Miami apartment. The ubiquitous ferry pilot could be found walking the streets of Chungking, bargaining furiously with an Arab merchant in Cairo, cursing the tepid beer in a London

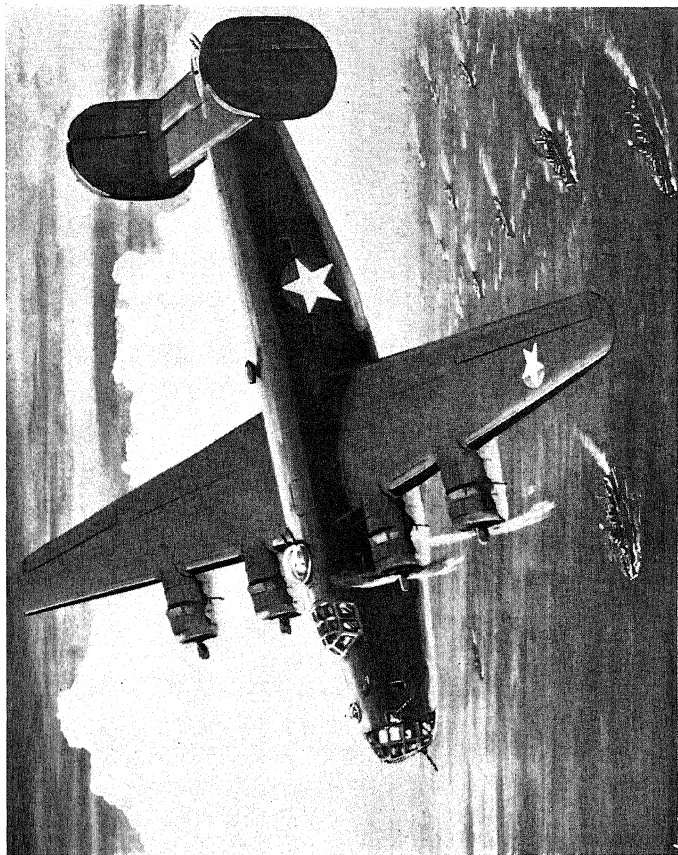
pub, or nervously awaiting repairs to his plane at an Australian airdrome.

It was my privilege to have been one of those ferry pilots. I flew bombers to Britain long before the United States entered the war. I spent long and lonely hours in training and checking green crews who had been asked to fly an ocean. It was, all in all, an endlessly fascinating life, full of adventure and contrast. We knew beautiful, lonesome nights in a jet black sky, 20,000 feet above the angry Atlantic, and days of battle against desert heat.

Ferry pilots traveled almost constantly, from Montreal to England, Miami to Chungking, San Francisco to Port Darwin. Their days and nights rolled away beneath them in successive patterns of monotonous ocean, deadly jungle and desert sand.

It wasn't an easy job. Jockeying a fleet, tricky bomber overloaded with gasoline from a sandy runway in the African Sudan, or from a downhill, down-wind strip of steel in forty-below weather in Greenland requires more than the normal amount of skill, mixed with a little old-fashioned muscle.

Ferry pilots came from every part of the world. Among them were some of the best pilots living. There was Scott, winner of the famous London-Melbourne race; "Duke" Schiller, noted Canadian Arctic flyer; Joe Mackey, international stunt-flying ace; a Dutch airline pilot; another from Egypt; and Clyde Pangborn, an American of round-the-



"Bombers Across," a painting by Sergeant Kenneth Gordon, United States Army
Air Forces.



Royal Navy men act as pallbearers at funeral in Scotland for 22 victims of an air ferry crash, 18 of them American pilots being flown back to Montreal for another flight of bombers.

world renown. Here and there one saw the dusty blue uniform of the Royal Air Force, and the D. F. C. was a common sight.

With the exception of a few who were new to this most hazardous kind of flying, all the pilots were at the top of their profession. They were not only expert flyers, but they had an excellent working knowledge of navigation, meteorology, airplanes, engines, and the thousand little details which mean the difference between getting an expensive, much-needed bomber to the fighting forces, or winding up in the ocean, or in the green depths of a jungle. No other kind of flying, anywhere in the world, calls for the varied skills which the free-lance ferry pilot possesses.

The airline pilot's job has always been considered the acme of the flying profession, but it can scarcely be compared with ferry piloting. The ferry pilot's training begins where the airline pilot's ends. An airliner flies back and forth over the same route along an airway ten miles wide, designated by the Civil Aeronautics Authority. Routes are clearly marked on the aviation maps of the United States. These airways are furnished with the best lighting system in the world, a system of flashing beacon lights to guide the planes in the dark. A radio beam is projected along the center of every airway, which gives the pilot a clear and well-defined path to follow. A complex system of radio control enables him to talk in flight to control stations on the ground behind him, under him and far ahead. As he

approaches his destination, he is given verbal landing instructions from a control officer at the airport.

Behind the airline pilot, and supporting him, is a smooth-working organization. A large part of its personnel is devoted entirely to aiding the flyer. The planes he flies get the best maintenance care; the radio facilities are unsurpassed. He is told at what altitude to fly, when to ascend, and when to descend. He is kept advised by radio at all times of other ships in the air, their location in respect to him, and similar details. In short, most of the airline pilot's thinking is done for him. His chief job is to learn the route he flies and to do as he is told.

In sharp contrast, the ferry pilot begins by possessing all this knowledge so that he can fly in the United States. But most of his flying is done where there are no radio ranges or ground control stations. He must navigate by the stars, the sun and other heavenly bodies, therefore a knowledge of maps and the ability to interpret them quickly and accurately is essential. The maps used in my ferrying days were not the well-marked, precise sectional and regional maps of the United States, but charts and maps which were drawn years ago, and more often than not, were inaccurate in many important details.

The ferry pilot must have a better than average knowledge of the workings of a radio direction finder, and know when it can be trusted and when not to depend upon it. Some of the desert airports he approaches can be found

only by means of radio compass. Quite often he approaches these fields at night, or in a storm. A little knowledge under those conditions may prove worse than none at all.

Often the only weather information available to the ferry pilot consists of what he is able to gather from personal observation. Upon his knowledge and ability to interpret correctly the weather signs around him depend the lives of his crew and the safety of his ship. More than one bomber left the shores of Newfoundland, bound for the British Isles, never to be heard from again. It is a safe bet that some of those disappearances were caused by ice. Ice is the dreaded enemy of all who fly the North Atlantic. It forms on the wings, destroying their lift, and it clutches at the engine's carburetor. Only the pilot with a comprehensive knowledge of icing conditions—where they are found, how to avoid them, and what to do if caught in them—can hope to survive a flight across the northern route in the fall, winter or spring.

A good working knowledge of airplanes and engines is almost a "must" for the transatlantic ferry pilot. The ships he flies are new. The minor troubles which always crop out in the first hundred or so hours of flight inevitably happen on the ferry hops, far from any overhaul shops or well-equipped maintenance depots. There is very little a pilot can do to repair a ship while in flight, but if he has knowledge enough to detect mechanical trouble before it gets well started, he can prevent a disaster. A real under-

standing of engines is the only recipe for being able to fly successfully in temperatures of fifty below and 130 degrees above zero, Fahrenheit, with the same type of ship and engine.

Tremendous overloads are flown successfully in and out of desert fields, and off steel strips laid in the jungle. The ferry pilot was a pioneer in this development, out of necessity rather than desire. In order to get a small twin-engine bomber across the ocean nonstop, it was necessary to install extra gasoline tanks, which meant frequent take-offs with tremendous overloads.

That old saw anent "no substitute for experience" was never truer than in the business of flying. You can teach a person to fly an airplane in a few weeks; young boys have been sent into combat as trained pilots with less than a year's experience behind them. But the remarkable record of the ferry pilots stems primarily from the fact that almost all of them had years of flying experience.

So many times the difference between life and death, in an unusual and dangerous situation, depends upon a pilot's flash decision. His mind turns quickly to a similar circumstance which may have happened to him years before. Perhaps he remembers that crash he had five or six years ago in Podunk, when an engine "cut out" and he turned back to the field instead of gliding straight ahead into some clear space. Or the time he tried to take off with a load of joy-riding passengers and forgot to turn on the gas.

In any event, the ability to draw upon a fund of practical knowledge gained from years of experience is a primary factor in the ferry business.

Ferry pilots have gained their experience in a variety of ways. Some of them learned to fly years ago in the Army, Navy or Marine Corps. Others learned at the better commercial schools; a few were airline trained. The majority have had a diversified background of military flying, barnstorming, instructing and other types of civilian aeronautics.

My own background and training are typical.

Chapter

2

FROM the start, Mother tells me, it was evident that I would be a problem child. Of four children in the family, I was the only one who had to be restrained from exploring the neighborhood at the age of two. The restraint was a length of clothesline tied around my waist and anchored to a big shade tree in the front yard.

At five, I was the object of a complaint from the neighbors: "If you don't do something about that little speed demon, trying to see how fast he can pedal his tricycle down the sidewalk. . . . He's going to kill someone, or maim them for life."

Unsatisfied with an ordinary bicycle, later on, I bought a motorcycle secretly with \$35 I had saved for the purpose. I wasn't old enough for a student driver's permit. Every afternoon after school, I could be found in a hayfield on the outskirts of town, pushing my dilapidated motorcycle out of its hiding place in an old barn. With the aid of a few trusted cronies, I would push my mount to the top of a gentle slope. Each one in turn would climb on the tandem seat behind me and away we coasted down the slope,

with the motor shut off. As soon as we lost speed, we had to jump off the cycle hastily because it was too heavy for us to hold once it started to fall over on its side.

Looking back now, I wonder how I lived through adolescence. I owned my first car as soon as I was old enough to drive and it wasn't long before I was the despair of the local police, whose patrol car I could usually outdistance by virtue of special gearing in my sport phaeton. It wasn't a desire to be a show-off, or to break the law, but simply an insatiable taste for speed and thrills that prompted my misadventures. It has always been my boast that I could drive or fly anything with wheels, a boat bottom, or wings.

On the other hand, my brother Leo, who drives his own car well, was never a spectacular driver. He has never been on a motorcycle and for years I have tried vainly to get him into an airplane. Maybe the psychologists can explain it, but it is true that some people are born with the ability to drive motorcycles and fly airplanes. Others, like my brother, can be taught to do these things, but they lack that something inside them which is essential to the racing driver, the really expert pilot, or to any other human being who excels at handling a mechanical vehicle. It's that same quirk of nature which makes ace combat pilots. Call it recklessness, courage, or any other name: it's either in a man or it isn't.

Line up a thousand pilots chosen at random. Perhaps two

hundred of them will be exceptionally good, and out of those two hundred maybe twenty are experts who appear to know all the tricks and fly as though they were a part of their plane. Those twenty were born with what it takes. But the best training in the world won't make an expert of a man who wasn't born that way.

Even before I got out of grammar school, I was crazy about airplanes. A German boy who lived near by would come over to my house every night and we would sit on the floor with the latest aviation magazine, cutting out pictures of airplanes and pasting them in a scrapbook. By the time I entered high school in Webster, Massachusetts, I could name every type of airplane in the country and specify the kind of engine that powered it, the wing span, speed and other details. Naturally, my school work suffered. In the midst of a history lecture, I would be staring out of a window, absorbed in imaginary flight, and completely uninterested in an old-fashioned affair like the Civil War which couldn't boast a single airplane. Daydreaming, I could see the high school lawn changed into a busy airport, and every sparrow swooping across the greenery became a plane maneuvering skillfully to a landing. I spent my study periods wondering whether the mailman had brought me the latest advertising catalogue from some air school, or else anticipating the evening, when I'd be up on Dudley Hill to greet the mail plane.

That Boston to New York mail plane is one of the high

points of my life. In those days, flying the mail was an adventure and the men who flew it were real knights of the skies, in their open-cockpit ships. Leather jacket, helmet and goggles were the distinguishing marks of their profession.

Frank Crowley, a legendary figure, flew a Pitcairn Mail-wing along this route for Colonial Airways. On his ship was the number "13." The figure also appeared on the crash bracelet he wore, and it was painted in huge letters on the roofs of half a hundred houses between Boston and New York. Crowley was the hero of every boy in New England who wanted to be a pilot. Kids stood in back yards or perched on roofs all along the route on the nights Frank was flying. They waved worshipful greetings to him as he roared low overhead. When the early darkness of winter came, some of them rigged up powerful flashlights to signal the hero as he went by. Crowley never failed to acknowledge every signal by zooming low over the spot, or by flashing his lights.

I can't remember the number of evenings I trudged with my bicycle five miles up to the emergency landing field on Dudley Hill to wait there patiently until Number 13, a black-and-gold biplane, grew from a speck in the gathering twilight until it dived and zoomed a few feet above me, and a helmeted figure waved a gloved "hello." As the ship disappeared again, I would pedal furiously toward home, more determined than ever to be a flyer.

Wherever Frank Crowley is today, if he is still alive, I hope he reads this book so that he may know the pleasure he has given to so many boys. Who knows how many of today's pilots, in fighter plane cockpits or at the controls of huge bombers, got their first and lasting inspiration from the zooming salute of other mail planes, piloted by such men as Crowley?

One night the mail was forced down at the emergency field. "Hank" Tallman, flying the route, had been forced to turn back because of a fog between our town and Hartford. The mail sacks were placed aboard a train and Tallman prepared to spend the night at the field caretaker's house. The news spread quickly and cars full of townspeople started for the field. In those days many people had never seen an airplane on the ground.

In the vanguard of the curious were my chum, Leonard Malser, and I. Leonard was a friend of the caretaker, so we were allowed out on the field and stayed there until well after dark. Next day we were at the field bright and early to witness the take-off. The field was muddy and Tallman appeared to be uncertain whether he could lift the plane. But he decided to try it, and when he bogged down in the wet soil as he taxied into position, we were given the unforgettable opportunity to push on the wing struts and help the straining engine.

Finally, with the additional help of some farm hands, the ship was pushed onto a patch of solid ground, and with a

friendly wave of thanks, Tallman released the brakes and began rolling down the field. The grass was knee high and wet. It was obvious at once to all of us that the plane wasn't gaining enough speed as it neared the far end of the field. It bounced once or twice as the pilot tried to coax it off the ground.

There was a resounding crash as the steel propeller plowed into the stone wall at the field's boundary. People began running as the ship came to a wrenching stop, its tail in the air, the landing gear completely knocked out from under it. Tallman crawled out, shaken but unhurt. The cockpit floor had been torn loose and had just missed crushing his legs.

We spent half that night guarding the wreck and keeping people from smoking near it. No police guard could have done the job more zealously. While we mounted our post, we gave ourselves a liberal education on the workings of a real airplane. We studied every instrument and control and took turns sitting inside, imagining that we were the pilot. It never occurred to us that Tallman could have been killed or seriously injured; there was no place for anything but rosy pictures in our world.

Not long afterward, I convinced my parents that it was useless for me to go on to college to prepare for a career in law or medicine, or to enter the textile industry as my father had done. I intended to fly, if I had to run away and join the Army or Navy to do it. In the face of this

ultimatum, my parents agreed to compromise. They would send me to Parks Air College in St. Louis, Missouri, to take a course in airplane and engine mechanics. I was not to fly, because it was too dangerous. And so, at sixteen and overflowing with enthusiasm, I took the train for St. Louis.

I spent a year at Parks, which at that time was probably the largest civilian aviation school in the world, and certainly one of the best. We lived in modern brick dormitories, had our own cafeteria on the school grounds, and attended regular classes in well-equipped classrooms and shops. I learned aviation from the ground up: welding, sheet metal, woodwork, dope and fabric, and engines. We did everything, from fashioning small metal fittings to assembling and rigging a complete airplane and installing the engine.

But I was sick at heart; I wanted to fly. All day the training ships were busy taking off, doing practice maneuvers up above, and landing again. I spent my lunch periods and most of my spare time watching the planes. Every time one left the ground, my heart went with it. Worst of all, it wasn't that I couldn't afford to learn flying because my mother and my aunt were sending me money orders constantly, "just in case you need something." If I enrolled for a formal course, however, I would have to obtain my parents' permission.

In this extremity, I made a deal with one of the pilots, Tom Livermore, of Tampa, Florida, and he agreed to teach

me. Tom had completed the transport pilot's course and was employed part time to fly passengers on short hops and to instruct. A friend of his, another student, owned his own plane and Tom flew it for him. We used it for my lessons. It was painted a lovely red, and on each side of the nose was a white elephant with upturned trunk, a symbol of good luck.

No youngster ever had a better flying teacher; of the thousands of men I've known, I have never admired anyone more than Tom Livermore. I saw him first the day after I arrived at Parks. He stood in front of the dormitory entrance, wearing dark-blue trousers, a shirt open at the throat and a buckskin vest open in front. A pair of soiled buckskin gloves poked out of a hip pocket and an old felt Stetson was pushed back on his head, exposing thick, curly brown hair. His face was lean and hard, copper colored, and he had the keen gray-green eyes that novelists give their heroes. In short, Tom looked more like Gary Cooper than Cooper himself, and to my sixteen-year-old imagination, he typified everything I wanted to be.

Years later, we teamed together as captains in the Royal Air Force Ferry Command. He still had the same picturesque drawl in his voice, hadn't changed a bit except for a little gray at the temples. Quiet and unassuming, he was liked and admired by everyone. Tom was killed during the last months of 1942, in Trinidad, while he was flying in command of a Liberator bomber of the RAF Ferry Com-

mand. For two years he had been pushing ships across the oceans and jungles to get them to the fighting men at the front. For a long period of time before, he had been a member of the Air Transport Auxiliary in England, where he ferried Spitfires, Hurricanes and bombers to various fields in the British Isles. There was no D. F. C. or air medal for Tom, not even a posthumous award. He was a ferry pilot.

Under Tom's tutelage in St. Louis, I spent all my time learning to fly. Flying came easily to me; I soloed after one hour and twenty minutes of instruction. By the time I had completed my mechanic's course, I was well advanced in my flying. But my aviation career hit a snag. I graduated into the depression world, where there was no need for newly trained pilots or mechanics. Even experienced pilots were looking for jobs. I came back to the East, consequently, to complete my formal education. But in the fall of 1932, tired of having nothing to do, I enlisted in the United States Army, where I spent the next three years.

After my army hitch, and until the beginning of 1940, I spent my time barnstorming, stunt flying and parachute jumping through the East and the Middle West. I jumped at air shows and fairs, mostly delayed drops, falling six to ten thousand feet before I opened the chute. I took part in the National Air Races every year at Cleveland, and I even acted as announcer at other air shows. Owning my

own plane, I gradually acquired the most valuable experience, carrying passengers from small fields of every description. A good many pilots got their start by barnstorming. "Hopping" passengers in and out of hay lots and farmers' fields teaches a flyer more in three months than he could learn in a year of flying from some large modern airport. It takes precise judgment and skill to get a plane loaded with passengers off the ground and out of a field that is within a few feet of being entirely too small. Constant landings with power off develop in a pilot a nicety of judgment and a skill in maneuvering to land on a precise spot that no other kind of flying can give him.

At last I settled down for awhile in Syracuse, New York, where I bought some planes and equipment and organized my own flying school and airplane agency. The flying school did well, but when it became plain that the world intended to go to war again, I decided that the time had come to fulfill my ambition to be a military pilot. There was a lot of gossip around the airport about the chances of getting into the Royal Canadian Air Force. Excitement was in the air. Many of the younger pilots were already talking of going to England to join the RAF and become fighter pilots. We'd heard that the British and Canadian forces needed men, but no one seemed to have any exact information.

One day I decided to spike all the rumors and find out

for myself. Without saying anything to anyone else, I packed a bag, put it in my car and started for Ottawa. Once there, I went directly to RCAF headquarters. Men in the dusty blue uniform of the outfit were everywhere; it was a thrilling sight.

I stood patiently in line with a dozen or so other men, but when the recruiting office found out I was an American pilot, the atmosphere changed. I was ushered into an inner office immediately and greeted warmly by a gray-haired officer sitting behind a desk. I noted the single broad stripe of blue braid around his sleeves, signifying the rank of flying officer, equivalent to a first lieutenant's rating in our army. This officer explained that they were in need of trained pilots and would welcome me gladly. However, he cautioned, the United States was a neutral country and therefore he could not take me unless I had an address in Canada, in Ottawa, perhaps. A significant smile and look accompanied this last bit of information. I said I thought I understood and he told me where to obtain lodging for the night, presenting me also with a slip of paper upon which was written a name and address. The examining officer would be waiting for me at that address at nine o'clock next morning.

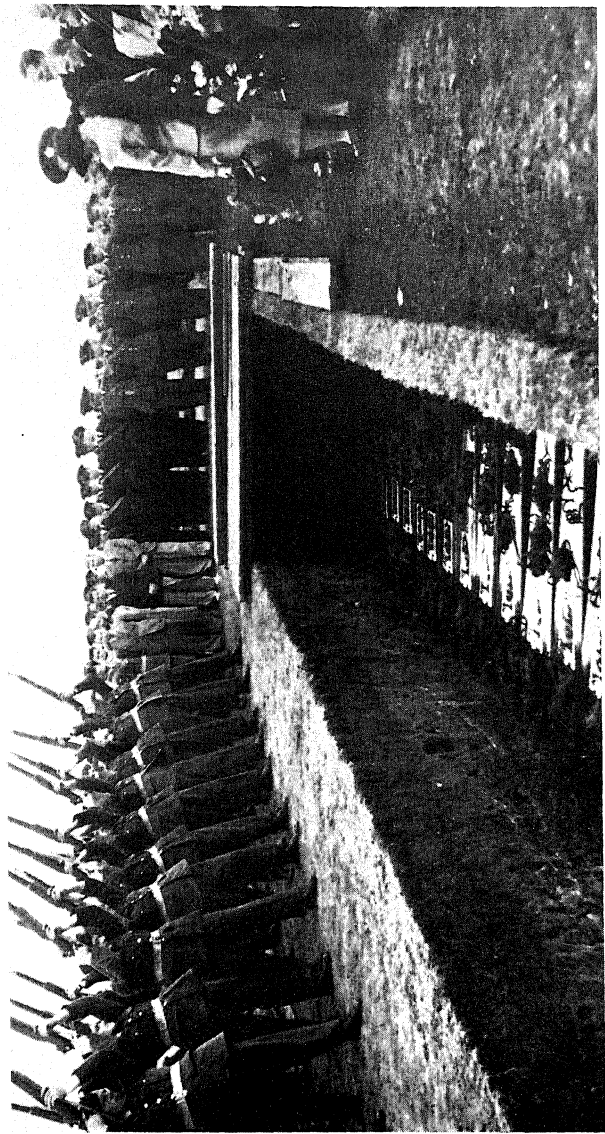
Rigid physical examinations, paper signing and other details took up most of the following day, and at the end of it, I was told that I had met all the requirements and would

be given the rank of flying officer. I was to return home and await notification, which should come within a fortnight.

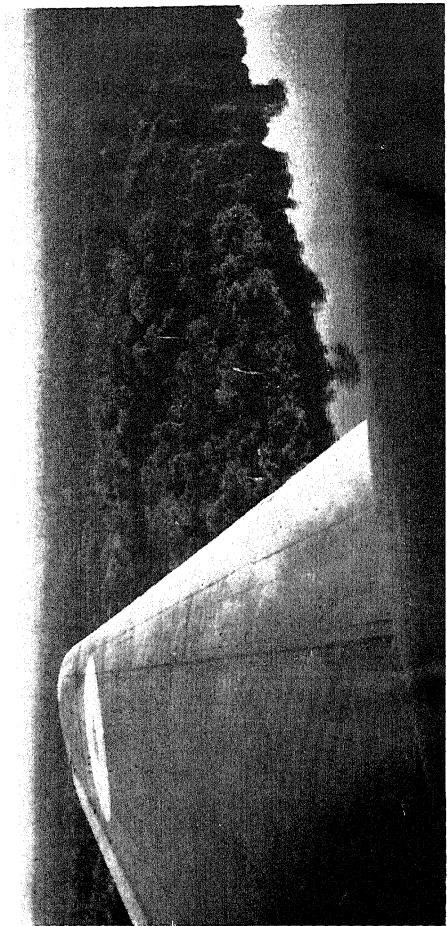
Elated and scarcely able to believe I had accomplished so much in two days, I drove back to Syracuse to put my affairs in order and close my business. After two weeks of waiting, a letter arrived stamped with the official seal of the RCAF. I tore it open hurriedly. The contents were a disappointment. Instead of telling me to report for duty, the letter explained that the practice of granting commissions directly from civil life had been discontinued and it would now be necessary for me to enlist as a sergeant-pilot. There was no doubt, the letter said, that with my experience I would soon win a commission.

I was angry and resentful at first. Plans and dream castles folded up right and left. I thought of how I'd sold my equipment at a loss, made arrangements for my students to continue their flying lessons, and settled the numerous details necessary to close the school. But that night I went home and thought things over. I decided to see it through, go to Canada, enlist in the RCAF and show them I could win a commission.

In January, 1940, I became a sergeant-pilot in the RCAF and started on the trail that led by devious and exciting ways to flying the oceans as a ferry pilot.



Eighteen more returning pilots and the four-man crew of a B-24 were killed in a takeoff from a Scottish field. They were buried by the RAF.



The Amazon River and the dense Brazilian jungle form a pattern of waiting death
below the wings of transport planes flying the southern ferry route.

Chapter

3

THE year and a half I spent in the RCAF was one of the most profitable periods in my life. I considered myself a good pilot when I left the United States, but I learned more about flying with the RCAF than I could have in ten years of ordinary civilian flying. More than that, I got a complete picture from the inside of how an air force works in a country at war—the training under pressure, the necessity for teamwork in a task as gigantic as Canada's tiny air force faced at the beginning of the war.

In Ottawa, when I enlisted, I met another American pilot who had been there a week waiting for an assignment. His name was Ed Hood. He came from a small town in Pennsylvania and we became friends immediately.

Orders were issued the day after enlistment instructing Sergeants Hood and Wynn to proceed to Trenton, Ontario, to be enrolled as students in the flying instructors' course at Central Flying School. The RCAF is patterned after the RAF. Both outfits wear the same uniform and have the same ranks; their organization setup is the same.

The Central Flying School compares with the old Randolph and Kelly fields in Texas, in the sense that it is a top training center. It was explained that we were being sent there directly because of our previous experience. We were both licensed pilots.

On a cold January day we arrived in Trenton, a small Canadian town of about 5,000 people. A sergeant met us at the station and drove us to the field, which was about three miles from town. Like most Americans, we had always thought of Canada as a vague, frozen country somewhere north of the border. And like most Americans at the start of the war, we pictured the Canadian Air Force as a small bush-league outfit with perhaps a handful of antiquated training planes. Consequently our first view of the Trenton base was a pleasant surprise. It was large and modern. The base was split by the Toronto-Montreal highway. On one side was a neat row of big steel and masonry hangars and the flying field, which was a large, clear airport with level approaches on all sides. On the other side were rows of three-story brick barracks, a large modern hospital, and about two dozen individual houses which in peacetime housed commissioned officers and their wives. One long building contained the enlisted men's mess, a sergeants' mess, recreation halls, gymnasium and a swimming pool.

The parade ground was a great paved area in the center of the base. On one side of it stood the administration building fronted by a long flight of stone steps. Behind it

were buildings housing classrooms, armament shops and garages. The officers' mess was a fine building set off by itself. In it were housed the commissioned personnel of the field who did not live in town with their wives or families. Unlike Army bases in the United States, Trenton's buildings were painted white.

We spent the day after our arrival taking more physical examinations, drawing clothing, and getting ourselves assigned to rooms. Hood and I were assigned to one small room furnished with twin beds, a steel locker for our personal possessions, and a writing desk.

As soon as our things were stowed away and we had tidied the room a bit, I turned to Hood, who had just finished making up his bed. I grinned, pointing to the neatly folded corners and the tightly stretched blankets and asked, "Where did you learn to make a bed like that?"

"I was at Randolph Field," Hood said, with a flash of pride.

I pointed to my own bed. It was made exactly the same: hospital corners, sheet folded back over the blanket exactly six inches from the pillow, a symbol of my own service in the Army. We shook hands and promised ourselves solemnly that we would keep the neatest room in the barracks. We started that night by borrowing a brush and some wax from the barracks orderly and polishing the floor until it shone.

Hood and I found ourselves in a new class which had

just been formed and was known as Course Six. We were the only non-Canadians except for a fellow from Wyoming named Ed Mileski. All of us were sergeant-pilots, with the exception of three men who were starting the course as flying officers because they had been in the last war.

The days were divided. Sometimes we would fly in the morning and drill in the afternoon. Then the procedure would be reversed. I was assigned to "A" flight and my instructor was Flight Sergeant Don Willis of the RAF. Willis and another chap named Abercrombie had been loaned to Canada by the RAF as instructors. A little anxious at having been assigned to a noncommissioned officer, I asked one of the other instructors about it. He told me how fortunate I was to be assigned to Willis, who with Abercrombie had been an "A" category instructor in the RAF for years; the pair were conceded to be the best in Canada.

We began our training in two-place Fleet biplanes. There were three different models, differing chiefly in their power plants. One had a 160-horsepower Kinner engine, one a 125-horsepower Kinner, and the third was powered with an Armstrong-Siddeley Civet of 140-horsepower. We tried to avoid the latter because, unlike American engines, it rotated counterclockwise and thus its torque made turns to the left more difficult. We were accustomed to counteracting for the opposite torque of American engines. The rugged little training biplanes were used throughout the

RCAF for elementary instruction on account of their sturdy construction and ability to withstand abuse.

The normal procedure for a recruit entering the Air Force was to be given his initial training of approximately fifty hours on Fleets. Then he proceeded to the next stage, where he flew heavier and faster ships like the North American "Yale," and then the "Harvard," which is the name the British gave to the North American AT-6. Those who were chosen for twin-engine training went to schools using the Avro Anson reconnaissance bomber, the "Oxford," and later the American Lockheeds and Cessnas. After winning their wings, a select few would be chosen to be sent to Central Flying School (CFS) to be trained as instructors. Such an assignment is considered an honor and a privilege.

Each of us got approximately thirty-five hours of instruction in Fleets. The stress was on precision flying. If you were told to glide at seventy miles per hour, you glided at seventy and not at sixty-eight or seventy-two. A slow roll was done at exactly one hundred ten. We practiced "forced landings" by the hour. The instructor "cut" the engine at unexpected moments and it was our job to glide through a prescribed pattern to a successful landing without power, on to some small field of postage-stamp size. Moreover, we had to do aerobatics smoothly and with precision.

Bear in mind that all this flying—and the air was thick

with planes from dawn until dusk—went on seven days a week, in fair weather and foul. I have flown hundreds of hours up there when it was snowing so hard you could barely see across the airdrome. Great steel rollers, drawn by tractors, packed the snow down hard twenty-four hours a day, making the field a level white surface hard as rock. It made landings extremely difficult because the unbroken surface provided no opportunity to gauge height.

It has long been the policy of the United States Army and Navy to train pilots in the sunshine of Texas, Florida, California and other Southern states. No doubt the year-around good weather greatly expedites the whole training program and enables the services to turn out pilots much more rapidly, but it is inevitable that the system tends to produce "fair weather" pilots. There is a great deal of difference between flying from huge expanses of concrete bathed in Texas or Georgia sunshine, and flying out of small and rough fields in summer heat, bitter cold, snow, rain, or springtime mud.

In this respect, I believe the Canadian flyer is better equipped, the day he wins his wings, to cope with weather and unusual situations than his American counterpart. I know that the bad weather flying I was forced to do in the RCAF taught me much and greatly increased my confidence in my own ability.

The pilot training system used by both British and Canadians is unique and worth taking a moment here to

explain. It is called the "patter" system—"patter" meaning the line of chatter used by the instructor while he demonstrates maneuvers in the air. It is well known that no two instructors teach exactly alike, and that sometimes an expert pilot makes a poor instructor because he lacks the ability to impart his knowledge to the student. Our army and navy air forces have tried for years to develop some system which would insure uniformity of flying instruction in both services so that a cadet in Texas would be taught a maneuver in exactly the same way as a cadet in another school hundreds of miles away in Alabama or Florida. A large measure of success has been achieved by the use of standardized flying equipment and methods, and by running all instructors through a refresher course designed to standardize flying procedures.

But the weak point in uniformity of instruction is the human element. Lieutenants Smith and Jones, graduating from the same school, may fly exactly alike. Perhaps they both execute a vertical turn in precisely the same manner, but they will not teach it alike. Jones may have a clearer conception of the maneuver, or of the control movements necessary, and therefore be better able to explain it to his student. Or perhaps his vocabulary or natural ability to explain and describe is much better than Smith's. In such a case, Jones' student will get better instruction than Smith's. Assume that Jones and Smith each teach one student to fly and both these students, in turn, teach two other pilots.

There will be differences in personality and manner of speech in these new instructors, and so the same flying maneuver will be taught two more different ways.

The RAF system has beaten this obstacle. Every embryo instructor at CFS is issued a little red book titled, *Principles of Flying Instruction*. To the pilot learning to be an instructor, it is "the patter book." It is his Bible. He must learn almost verbatim every word of its sixty pages, and thus it is the nemesis of many a would-be instructor. His flying may be superb, but unless he learns the twenty-two sequences of flying contained within the pages of that little red book, and is able to recite them in perfect unison with his flying as he demonstrates each maneuver in the air, he is lost.

A numbered sequence covers every possible maneuver, from a normal turn to an Immelmann turn, or roll off the top of a loop. The words describing each maneuver are put into the instructor's mouth. Thus he teaches with exactly the same word description as another instructor a thousand miles away. It does away with the risk of confusion from linguistic individualism.

The next few weeks were crammed full. More than one night I studied navigation, meteorology, the patter, or some problem in machine guns or bombing until three o'clock in the morning, only to put away my books and begin waxing

the floor of our room for the next morning's inspection. It was not uncommon to spend a morning drilling with rifles on the parade ground in a snowstorm, our gloved fingers bitten by the numbing winds swirling across the bare field. We flew in the afternoon, and that part of it we loved.

At the end of our training in the Fleets, we were given a check ride by the CFI, or chief flying instructor. He acted as a student and it was our job to take him up and "teach" him whatever maneuvers he asked. We were graded on flying ability, voice, instructor personality and general skill. Those of us who passed the rigid tests went on to the sleek, high-powered "Harvards." These were the basic trainers. They were powered with a 550-horsepower Wasp engine, constant-speed propeller, flaps and retractable landing gear. It was quite a step up from the Fleets.

There followed more weeks of flying the same maneuvers over and over again. Only now the speeds were greater and the patter varied to suit the higher performance standards of the ship. The instructors got tougher and demanded more and more precision. We were required to do blind take-offs under a hood. Precise instrument flying went with it, and in the evenings we attended classes in instrument flying in the administration building. There we were taught to fly by instruments in the Link trainer, that wonderful piece of mechanism which is a small model of an airplane

swiveled on a fixed base, in which every possible maneuver of a real airplane can be duplicated without leaving the ground.

Tragedy interrupted our rush of activity. One night Ed Hood suggested that we give ourselves a treat and spend the evening in the near-by town of Belleville, so we put on clean uniforms and rolled off in Ed's convertible coupe. It was an unexciting night. We had a few beers, then went to the local movie. Coming out of the theater, we met a girl whom Ed knew and she accepted his invitation to ride along with us. The roads were slippery and I cautioned Ed once or twice to take it easy as he drove me back to the barracks. I left them at the main gate and watched them speed off. Ed said he would drive his friend home and be back in plenty of time to get a good night's rest.

I was sound asleep when a sergeant shook me awake roughly. Still drowsy, it was a minute or so before I understood what he was saying.

"I've got bad news for you," the sergeant's strained voice reverberated in my ears. "They want you to go to the morgue in Belleville to identify Hood. He's dead."

I got the details as I dressed. It was the old story of a skidding car, a crash into another vehicle, this time a big trailer truck. Ed had been killed instantly, his neck broken; the girl had been thrown clear and was only slightly hurt.

We had a military funeral for Ed. He was the first American to be killed in the RCAF. That night I sat alone

in my room and wrote a letter to his mother, and cried.

It took me a while to get over the suddenness of Ed's death, but the increased pace of the training schedule helped. I had graduated to flying twin-engine Ansons, Oxfords and Lockheeds now, and I was kept busy.

Graduation came at last on a muddy spring day. We stepped up proudly before the school commander and wings were pinned on our tunics as he shook hands, with a word of congratulation. I was particularly proud because I was one of three in the class to graduate with a "B" category as an instructor, the highest possible award given at CFS. Most graduates at CFS get a "C." An "A" can be won only after six months on active duty as an instructor, and upon passing special flight tests.

Our commissions had been delayed and there was some disappointment as we left for our new posts as sergeant-pilots. I was assigned to Camp Borden, Ontario. After eight weeks of instructing duty there, I was called into the commandant's office and told that I was to report back to Central Flying to be an instructor there. I was thrilled. To be chosen as an instructor at CFS was a top honor.

I found myself back in my old flight again, this time teaching others what had been taught to me. I had learned my lessons well and put forth every effort to be as conscientious as my instructors had been with me. An even greater thrill came shortly after I joined the staff. I was notified by Squadron Leader Edwards that Mileski and

I had been commissioned as flying officers. We had been jumped over the rank of pilot officer, which corresponds to second lieutenant. We soon learned to carry our new rank with ease and dignity, and settled down to the job of making instructors out of Air Force pilots.

Advanced flying instruction in an air force at war is a job that takes everything in a man. The pressure is great and it is necessary to cram the training given in peacetime into a much shorter space of time, without sacrifice of high standards. It means flying seven days a week, day and night, for long periods without leave. Naturally there were accidents, some of them fatal.

We had a streak of bad fortune at CFS which lasted for several weeks and had everyone on edge. Flight Lieutenant Jasper's crash came first.

It came on a bad night for flying, when two ships were out on cross-country navigation flights—a twin-engine Anson and a single-engine Norseman. Both were carrying student navigators. As the weather closed in and the cloud ceiling dropped lower and lower, the flight control officer became worried. We kept a watch at the field and a ground crew set out a flare path. The Anson came gliding in about eleven o'clock to report it had flown through some nasty weather to reach the field and the weather was getting steadily worse. The fog rolled in from Lake Erie, smothering the countryside with its dangerous blanket of clammy wetness.

The Norseman had to come home along the same route. It had a radio on board, but repeated attempts to reach it failed. It was nearly midnight and we knew that it carried only enough gas for about twenty minutes' more flying time, as nearly as we could figure it. The only consolation was that Jasper, the pilot, was an experienced navigator, and as we waited there in the dark, we felt that his skill would bring the ship in if the gas held out. Perhaps the radio had gone, we told ourselves.

Business at the barracks called me away from the airport, where a group of us had been waiting. I had been at the barracks only a half hour when word came that radio contact had been made and the crew was preparing to bail out as they groped in a sea of fog, not sure of their whereabouts. That was the last we heard. We knew their course carried them along the edge of Lake Erie, and if they were only a few miles off course to the south, they would drift into the water and drown without a trace.

There was nothing to be done now but wait for the telephone call which would come in from somewhere, we hoped, telling us of a safe parachute drop, to be followed by similar calls from farmhouses or highway stations. It had happened before.

But the suspense was terrible.

As the night lengthened into dawn and no calls came, we organized a search. Several hundred men were sent out to scour the countryside in the vicinity of the ship's last

estimated position along the lake shore. About mid-morning, a message came from one of the searchers. Two parachutes could be seen floating on the surface of the lake some distance from shore. While these chutes were being retrieved, another party found the wrecked airplane in a woods. It had buried itself in the soft ground so that only the tail stuck out, its battered yellow fin pointing grotesquely into the sky.

Ground crews began to dig and pull the machine out of the soft earth. As a large section of the fuselage broke loose, one of the airmen noticed a shoe protruding from the mud. Afraid of what that shoe might mean, they dug furiously. Soon they scraped away the soil to disclose the parachute webbing and clothing of what had once been a man. As the afternoon wore on, the bodies of all the crew were pulled out of that hole, where they had been jammed in a terrific power dive. Apparently they had died in a last attempt to circle down close to earth to try to see through a break in the fog. The parachutes that were floating on the surface of the lake were flare chutes that had been released to light the ground below.

There was a noticeable tension among the student pilots the following day as the flag-draped caskets left the parade ground on trucks, bound for the railroad station.

The accident set off a streak of bad luck. I've tried to shrug off the old superstition that accidents come in threes, but time and again I've seen one crash followed closely

by more. Of course it may be that you simply wait for the next two crashes to occur and then count them in as part of the expected three.

In this particular case, the superstition became an ugly fact. Only a few days after Jasper's crash, Flight Lieutenant McBurney was killed. Again it happened at night, this time on night landing practice. Someone had neglected to hang a red warning light on a steel windsock tower at the edge of the field. The tower was in line with the flare path, and when McBurney came dragging in on a low approach with a student in the rear seat, they hit the darkened tower with the left wing. The ship turned over on its back and burst into flames. Poor McBurney, in front, never had a chance. Crushed by the weight of his ship, he died instantly. The student was rushed off to the hospital with a broken back.

A general feeling of fear swept through the station. It was nothing tangible. If you had asked any of the students whether he was afraid, you would have been met with an indignant burst of denial. Yet one sensed the increased tension among those who were assigned to blackout night flying, particularly on nights when the ceiling was low and the visibility below normal.

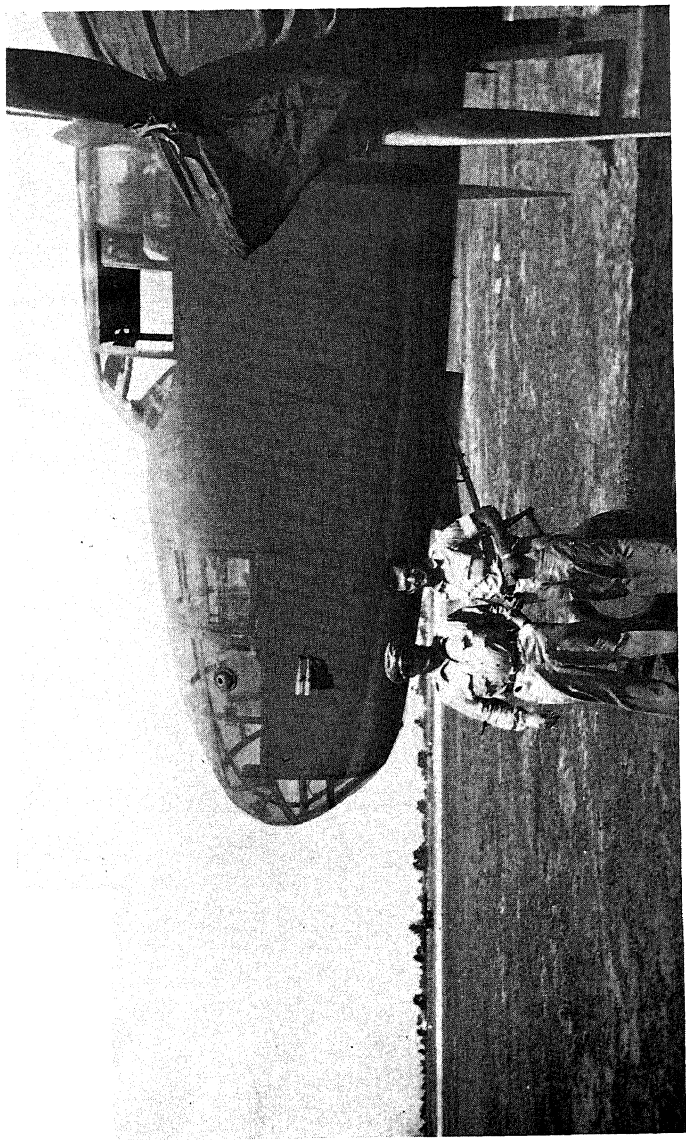
I felt it, too. Common sense told me the accidents were caused probably by human error, coupled with pilot fatigue. Still I found myself checking the ship's equipment just a little more carefully before I began a session of

night flying. I was determined, however, not to let an iota of nervousness or super-caution spoil the training I was giving to my students. I insisted more than ever on flying, even when the weather was bad, nor would I let my students use any landing lights for take-off or landing until they demonstrated that they were safe and confident without the use of lights. In that way, I built up their confidence in me and in themselves.

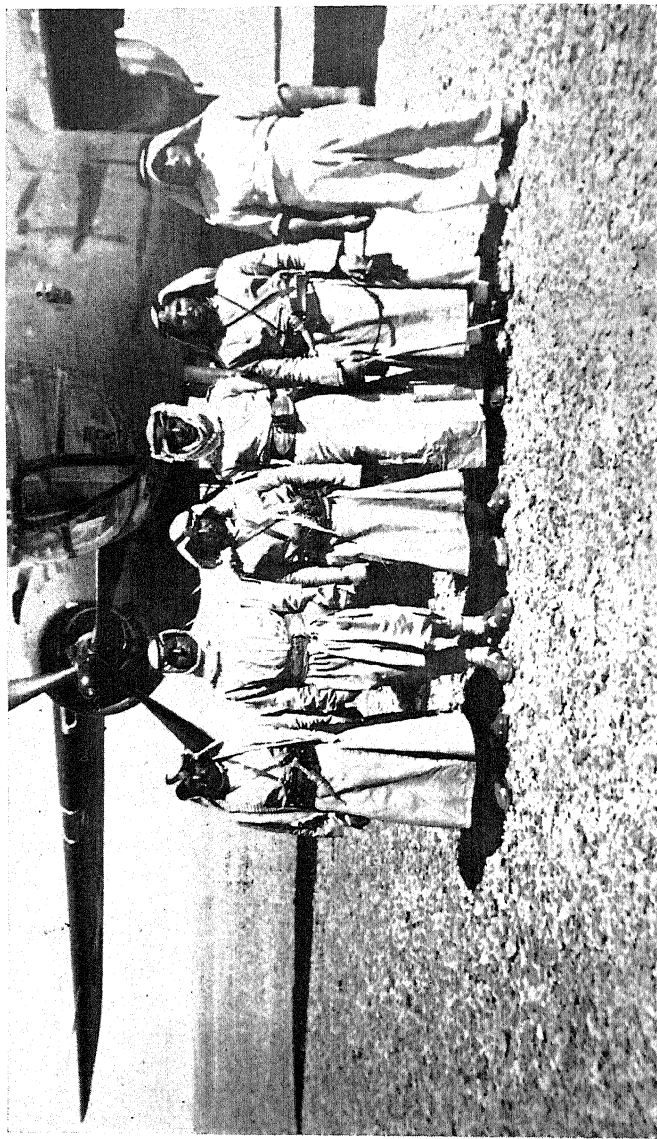
A few relatively serene days passed. Then came the third crash. This time it was in daylight. A student and instructor were practicing rolls off the tops of loops, in a Fleet. At the top of a loop, they stalled and went into an inverted spin. We figured they must have been too confused to jump, because neither one had loosened his safety harness. The ship plunged into a muddy swamp behind the airport, landing on its back and burying the passengers in the sticky muck. It took a crash crew more than half an hour to reach the plane and start pulling out the bodies.

Meanwhile, I had taken off with another student in a Harvard for an hour of aerobatics. I knew about the crash and decided to have a look. Spotting the yellow trainer on its back in the mud, I dived low to get a closer look just as they dragged the pilots from the wreckage. I called back through the interphone:

"See those guys down there? Well, that's what will happen to you if you don't learn your aerobatics properly.



Captain Wynn and his co-pilot, Virgil Adair, pose with a B-25 Mitchell, shortly before its nose wheel collapsed on a take-off at Natal, Brazil.



Forced down in hostile desert country in the Middle East, and landing with dangerously thin tires on the kind of shale surface shown here, Captain Wynn found his disabled plane surrounded by Arabs.

Now let's go upstairs and I'll show you what they were trying to do."

I gunned the plane and got up to 5,000 feet. Still directly over the crash below, I proceeded to demonstrate the maneuver which had ended so tragically for the poor devils down in the mud.

"O. K.," I shouted to my student, "let's see you try it."

There was no answering "yes, sir." I twisted in my seat to see what was holding us up. I almost jumped out of the plane when, instead of the familiar face behind me, I looked into an empty cockpit. My heart was in my mouth. I loosened the harness and stood to get a better look. There was my student in the back seat all right, but he was doubled over, his head between his knees, being extremely sick.

"What the hell's the matter?" I asked, when he straightened up. The poor kid almost cried.

"Please, sir, I don't feel well. Those two fellows down there. I . . . I don't think I can do aerobatics today."

I learned a lesson right there. I'd scared the kid half to death by diving him over the scene and then taking him upstairs for aerobatics. What had started out to be a good object lesson had backfired.

"O. K., fellow, open your hood and get some air. I'll take her down."

I eased back to the airport in a gentle descent, dispatched

a hangar crew to clean out the ship, and took my still trembling student to the refreshment stand for a coke. I had become rather calloused and accustomed to such things as crashes, but I learned that I could have ruined a good pilot by such a psychological jolt as I had given the sensitive boy. It took hard work to make a friend of him and explain carefully why it was so important to become a skilled pilot to avoid such tragedies as had befallen the two men in the marsh. I gave him the remainder of the day off. Later he became an outstanding pilot.

The business of training pilots had kept me busy, but I was aware nonetheless that something big was happening elsewhere. A tremendous project had started in the fall of 1940—the business of ferrying bombers to Britain. The Battle of the Atlantic was raging and the British needed every airplane they could muster to defend their island, and they needed them in a hurry. Attempts had been made to ship the planes by water, dismantled and lashed to the decks of freighters. It was an enormous task, not too successful. Planes had to be flown from West Coast factories to the East Coast. They were dismantled there, corrosion-proofed as protection against the salt spray and packed in giant, special crates, or else lashed, uncrated, to the deck of a freighter. This was a lengthy and costly procedure. Only a comparatively small number could be carried simultaneously and the chances of getting them through the submarine-infested Atlantic waters were slim.

Then someone suggested that the planes be flown to England. There was great opposition at once, even from many aviation experts, who labeled it as a foolish, dramatic attempt at stunt flying. After all, they pointed out, didn't it take months of careful preparation and special training for the Lindbergh and Chamberlain flights? To think of flying hundreds of airplanes across without a tremendous loss of life and equipment was almost unthinkable.

Nevertheless, a small group of diehards went on with their plans.

A base was established in Newfoundland amid great secrecy. This would shorten the nonstop flight by placing the jumping-off point practically at the ocean's edge. A small band of American civilian pilots and some of the best English pilots made up the original group who were to pioneer the route.

Months of planning followed. Then the first American bomber was flown across, nonstop and with no difficulty. Quietly, pilots were recruited for the ferry job. Old barnstormers, old racing pilots, former airline pilots answered the call. The salary was attractive and the chance to fly the ocean was a powerful magnet to pilots filled with professional pride. In every new pilot's mind, furthermore, was the thought that this war was our war, a war of right against wrong, and to be able to take desperately needed bombers to besieged England appealed to these liberty-loving Americans.

Gradually the plan took full shape and a trickle of bombers found its way across the ocean to the United Kingdom. This trickle was becoming a stream in the spring of 1941. It was then that I became determined to fly bombers across. For weeks I talked to fellow officers about it. Finally, I flew to Montreal, where the headquarters of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which had the ferrying contract, was located. I obtained the information I wanted, but was told flatly that no one was taken from the RCAF. Only civilian pilots were being recruited, but they told me, unofficially, that if I should ever become a civilian pilot, not a member of any air force, I would be accepted, because I met all the requirements as to flying hours and experience.

I went back to the station and immediately began the process of resigning my commission. After several weeks of putting in letters, and seeing the right people at headquarters, I was allowed, as an American citizen, to resign.

It was a sad day when I became officially separated from the RCAF. I had worked hard to get my commission and was proud to be an officer in the service. But I looked forward to the prospect ahead. The part I was to play in the war would be much more important.

I went at once to Montreal and was placed on the pay roll as a trainee for check training. My salary was to be \$10 a day until I had completed ground and flight training and was fully accepted as a ferry pilot. How long that would be, no one knew. It turned out to be twenty days. I got

a room at the Mount Royal Hotel and unpacked my belongings. I had brought along several books on navigation and meteorology and instrument flying, and I studied hard to refresh my memory and learn all I could. There was a tough, dangerous job ahead and I had no desire to be caught without all the flying knowledge I could command.

On my first night in the hotel, there was a pleasant surprise waiting for me. I ran into Tom Livermore, my old instructor. He had been flying in England as a ferry pilot and had just been transferred to transatlantic flying.

Next day I began my training.

Chapter

4

ON THE afternoon of August 10, 1941, the village of Prestwick, Scotland, was dripping in a typical damp drizzle. It was usually wet in Prestwick, but the little Scotch town always looked good to the ferry pilots because it was the terminus of their ocean hops. We made our landings at Prestwick, and took off for return trips from a town only a couple of miles away, where longer runways permitted easier take-offs for heavily loaded B-24 Liberators.

Another routine take-off for Canada was scheduled on this particular afternoon. It meant little to us—only more American pilots headed back to run the shuttle again.

Fog poured in from the ocean, the ceiling dropped to 900 feet and the Liberator sounded like a faraway king bee in the August dusk as we watched eighteen ferry pilots and the crew of four take off. It was an old custom to saunter over and watch the lads pull out. Usually they had a bundle of messages to be delivered to the wives back in Montreal. Captain Herbie White, a nice English chap, was at the controls as the plane thundered over us in a gradual climb into

the soup above. That flight didn't look right from the beginning. Maybe it was only professional criticism, but we argued aloud that White was doing it the hard way, performing that slow climb into blinding fog in the direction of a mountain, a few miles distant.

"Why in hell doesn't the guy sneak out over that flat firth in this mess," blurted Joe Silverthorn, an able American who learned his ferrying business down in Central America.

We watched the plane out of sight and hearing, and turned into a little inn on the fringe of the airdrome that was like a truck driver's roadside oasis in America. Somehow, we couldn't get that planeload of ferry pilots out of our minds. Normally we maintained radio silence coming into England, but we never failed to radio back progress of the homeward bound trip. This time there was no radio contact, only that blank silence you don't like.

Hours passed. My flyer's instinct prompted me to stretch across the hotel table and tell Silverthorn: "I'm afraid something's happened to Danny Dugan and those other guys. They're too far gone now without radio contact. If the radio went dead, you know they'd have turned back. It doesn't add up."

"Afraid you're right, Ed," Silverthorn answered. "No more Danny Dugan. That's sort of tough to believe. Jeez, what a guy he was!"

Danny was, indeed, a different sort of guy. He was a two-

fisted Irishman from Boston who spoke his mind freely and often, but a lovable character nonetheless. This was to be Danny's last flight. Only the day before he had left the ferrying service; he was on his way home for good.

"No more of Bradbrook's aviation stories in those British papers, either," Silverthorn mused. "Pretty damn good stuff, too."

Mild, likable Bradbrook, the co-pilot, was one of Britain's foremost aviation writers, and a great friend of pilot Herb White's. As we held our premature post-mortem on the unreported plane, I thought about Herb. He was the old-time, airlines type—more than 12,000 hours with British Imperial Airways. Only the trip before I had flown back to Montreal with him when I was acting as co-pilot. In a casual way, I had sauntered up forward to talk with him for a few hours and fly while he rested. Herb knew the ropes, and that's why we still held on through the night.

Not by the greatest stretch of wishful thinking could the Liberator take more than eighteen hours to reach Montreal, and when the plane was unreported after that time had expired, we knew we had lost eighteen buddies. We were clustered around the railing at the hotel when Silverthorn said what we had all been thinking.

"If you want to find Herb White and the rest of those boys, you'd better start looking over there on the mountain," he remarked.

One of the British pilots swarmed all over Joe, and threat-

ened to punch him in the nose. "Not too damn fast, old man," he said angrily. "White knew how to fly, and well. He was no lad, you know!"

Silverthorn retorted that only two weeks before he had asked to be relieved as White's co-pilot on those return trips. He didn't like the way Herb made those gradual climbs toward the mountain.

The report came an hour later. The plane, broken to pieces, had been found on the green hillside of the mountain. It was only thirty-odd miles away. Herb had crashed a few minutes after we saw the ship melt into the murky dusk the evening before.

The wreckage was near the summit. It was bad. The grinning, devil-may-care Texan, Watt King, had shoved off with his cowboy boots and big hat. They found only the boots—those boots which had caused so much amazement in Montreal and London as he clomped along the streets, far from his beloved prairies. Some of the pilots talked openly of sabotage and cursed fiercely at the thought of it. Most of them, however, leaned to Silverthorn's way of thinking, that it was simply a characteristic of White's to make that dare of the mountain.

I couldn't stop thinking of one thing—the messages that must have been trickling back to the apartments in Montreal where the wives of those kids were waiting, as they did from trip to trip. I wondered how King's pretty blonde wife would take the news.

Those courageous girls are real heroes of this war. Their husbands were flying a new, pioneering route over the Atlantic. Nothing but water and danger, and no ballyhoo about it. It was those girls, always waiting and never hinting how they feared our trips, that made the whole job easier.

That was the first time we had lost our pilots and it hurt. Next day we appointed Murray Dilly, of Kansas City, to make arrangements for the funerals. I'll never forget seeing Dilly in the hotel, writing out the names of twenty-two men on cards to be sent with the wreaths. Twenty-year-old Earl Watson, a California kid, stood beside me and whispered, "God, you don't realize what twenty-two men are until you see those cards spread out, do you?"

Wars don't wait long on formalities, even funerals, and twenty-two more men—eighteen American ferry crew men and four British crew members—prepared for another return trip to Montreal on August 14. This time Captain Stafford, a close friend of Herb White's, was the pilot. Perhaps we were oversensitive, but we noted traces of nervousness in Stafford's actions as the ground crew warmed up his plane. He hadn't slept since the British had canceled all return flights during the two days White's plane had been unreported. We wondered at the time why the British did it. The action only heightened an already tense atmosphere, but then they may have been checking on sabotage possibilities.

The Watson kid, just out of the United States Navy Air

Service as an enlisted pilot, had pulled down an honor on the trip. He was to co-pilot with Stafford.

I watched the men as they swung into the ship. There was rangy, picturesque Tex Anding, a Texan with a spiked moustache, who had flown in South America for years and who had spent many nights on the roof of his Montreal home, teaching me the tricks of celestial navigation. And Murray Dilly, the lad who had drawn the task of arranging the funerals for the victims of the last plane to take off, the boy who wrote so beautifully on those twenty-two white cards. And Jim Moffatt, the Canadian lad who had checked out with me in the RCAF, a grand flyer, a good and salty fellow.

Crowded into the sealed bomb bay belly of the big plane, eighteen of the ferry men were finally aboard. It's a long, monotonous trip, sitting there on the floor facing each other, bundled in fleece-lined flying suits that make men look like so many waddling teddy bears. It's dark inside; you see nothing, only sit and sleep. There is the noise of the motors to fill your dark world.

We were jittery when Stafford taxied out on the field and wheeled into the shortest runway.

"For God's sake, what the hell is the guy doing on that runway," I breathed.

"Take it easy, Ed old boy; he's been up before," McCawley said at my elbow.

No one knew why, but Stafford didn't take off into the

wind. He started revving his motors for the take-off into a slipping cross wind. It was almost elementary, I thought, not to do such a thing. (Several weeks later, the RAF officer in the control tower confided to me that he started to give Stafford the red light but thought that an old-line, noted pilot knew what he was doing.)

The heavily weighted plane began moving down the runway. Stafford gave it full gun, all four engines wide open, and was making the speed of a deer when the plane suddenly veered off the runway and roared across the grass. It bounced over an intersecting runway at terrific speed.

"Cut the engines!" we yelled wildly, futilely.

I didn't want to look, but I did. Stafford apparently made no attempt to stop the plane. There was no application of brakes. Its speed must have been 150 miles an hour when it rushed into the edge of the field and the six-foot embankment loomed ahead. Stafford did the instinctive thing—nosed it straight up to clear the embankment. The nose wheel left the ground, but the plane didn't follow. It crashed into the barrier and broke in two. The nose end hurtled crazily about sixty feet in the air and collapsed over a railroad track. Flames towered toward the sky. We had to stand and watch it. The Watson boy, the kid who had proudly waved good-bye from his co-pilot's perch, was thrown clear of the flames. He lived only eighteen hours.

Forty-four gone in four days.

No one slept that night. Vows were taken never to fly

again. I couldn't erase the memory of Murray Dilly writing those twenty-two cards. He wasn't there to write the new ones.

We cursed, we wept, we thought of some more wives back in Montreal. We knew they must turn from the job of comforting those who had gotten those "we regret to inform you" messages of only two days before to accept their own.

Some talked of sabotage, but I blurted out: "Sabotage, hell! Nothing can sabotage a man's mind and make him keep all four engines wide open without a chance of taking off."

Stafford was a right guy. I don't know what happened to him. When he pushed the Liberator down the runway maybe he was thinking of Herb White and the mountain—as we were on the ground.

The British canceled immediately all returning aircraft to Canada for forty-eight hours. Rumors were thicker than the fog. Next day they were having the funerals for the twenty-two who had been killed four days earlier. Even before the second plane crash, we had appointed Don Teel, a drawling Texan with cowboy boots, to attend the mass burial of the mountain victims as our representative. He went alone, because pilots are funny fellows sometimes. Superstition and all that. Teel was the only American present when the twenty-two caskets, draped with American and British flags, were lowered into a common grave. I

clipped an article from the *Glasgow Bulletin* that told the story:

For two miles men and women walked in procession from the naval barracks to the hillside cemetery where the 22 air-men who lost their lives when their plane crashed on a mountain were laid to rest in one long grave under the Manse trees.

Police led the procession, followed by Home Guards and naval ratings. American airmen's coffins draped in the United States flag were followed by those of Canadians, Australians, and British wrapped in the Union Jack.

The Duke of Montrose and county officials led the mourners at the graveside. In the shadow of the ruins of a fifteenth century chapel they were met by a priest, a Church of England clergyman, the parish minister and all the clergy in the district.

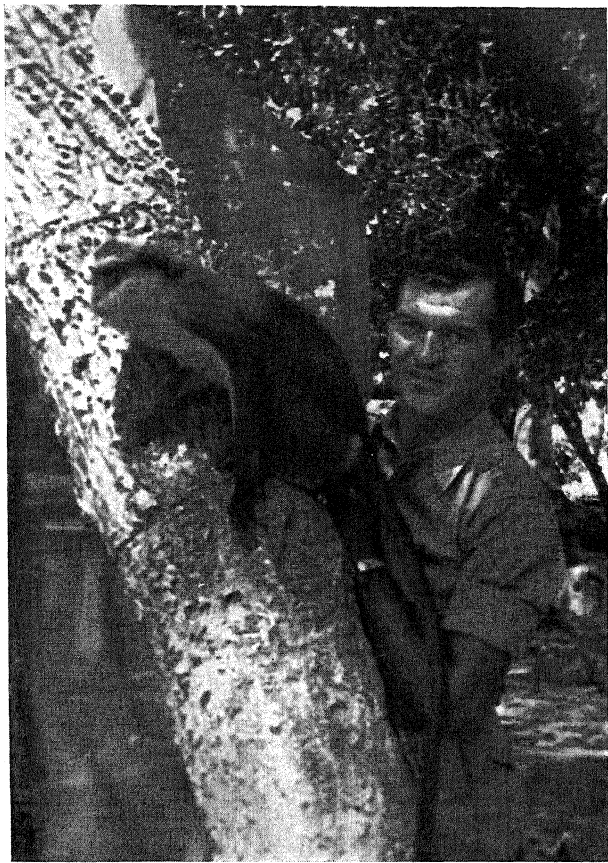
Relatives—fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and wives—of the dead filed slowly to the side of the grave as sailors and marines filled it with flowers. The Duke of Montrose, representing the King, expressed His Majesty's sorrow for 22 homes in America, Canada, in Australia and the United Kingdom.

Walking forward to the grave, the Duke said: "In the name of the King I salute the honoured brave."

After prayers had been offered for the dead the naval guard fired a farewell salute, their empty cartridges falling into the grave. The Home Guard stood in salute. *The Last Post* was then sounded and this was followed by *Reveille*.

That was it—except that no relatives of our dead friends were present. They were in their apartments, back in Montreal.

It was the first mass burial for gallant ferry pilots. Three days later, they buried twenty-two more.



This is the monkey Captain Wynn smuggled on a Pan-American transport from Accra, West Africa, to Natal, where the outraged animal broke jail and pursued a dignified Colonel off the plane.



Screen star Martha Raye, on a tour of Army camps, poses with Captain Wynn at Accra, West Africa.

Chapter

5

A FEW hours after the second crash, Bob Gunn and I were sent to London on a ferry flight. It was welcome relief. We wanted to get away from Prestwick. There was too much talk; the pilots were worried and a little frightened. Forty-four in four days had frayed their nerves.

We dodged barrage balloons all the way down to London. On the trip with us was Vic Stack, of Syracuse, New York, a flight engineer on the shuttle Liberators. In the swank Embassy Club that evening, he created an incident which had us all in stitches.

Vic got plastered, to put it plainly. A little, comical man, he would toast the King with every drink he absorbed. At each toast, he would pull a huge English penny solemnly from his pocket and fling it wildly over his shoulder. Pennies clanged all over the premises during the evening, and Vic was getting the undivided attention of the formal gathering.

One fine-looking lady, who had just received a profuse apology from Vic for having tossed a penny in her hair, motioned the headwaiter and told him that she "rather

liked the American lad," and to leave him alone. Vic wavered before the headwaiter, bowed and presented him with a penny, remarking: "What's more, my man, you can clean up in the morning and keep all the other little pennies also."

Next day, Gunn and I went back to Prestwick, and on the afternoon they buried the victims of the second crash, the two of us and Tom Livermore went to the funerals. For no other reason than to seek relief from the tension, we wandered around until nightfall and then went to a burlesque show.

Burlesques there are no different than in Brooklyn or Dallas. The comedians were terrible and thick Scotch accents dripped all over the place. The girls were worse.

It was foggier than usual when we left the theater and walked down the cobblestone street. Beside us in the pea soup was an RAF flying officer on leave from a station in Ireland. I never knew why, but he made a crack about Americans being too talkative and I instinctively searched him out in that steamy darkness and planted a good right on his cheek. If I do say it, it was quite a punch—fog, black-out and everything considered.

Next day we were sitting in Pop's bar and our flying officer friend, at a near-by table, was telling an elaborate tale to a few listeners about how he had gathered the shiner. It appeared two thugs had leaped upon him in the dark near the burlesque. He didn't recognize me.

But now it was our turn to jam into the belly of a Liberator to make the Montreal run. Not many of us were left, and if there was a man among us who didn't have a full grown case of nerves while we packed that afternoon, I couldn't find him. The weather was raw and cold. The bleak setting matched our emotions. All of us had sworn silently that if we got through this time we would demand American crews to man the Liberators on future returns to Montreal. Now that I look back upon it, perhaps it was simply that we had more confidence in our own fellows. Certainly the British are good flyers and have proved it time and again in this war with an aerial lashing that Germany will never forget.

The British had determined to lighten the load of the returning planes, so on the evening of August 24, only twelve ferry pilots were listed as passengers on the flight instead of the usual eighteen. Our pilot was Captain Stuart, a Briton with a fine flight record. It was the same airport, the same murky dusk, the same setting as we prepared to take off.

Over on the runway, so tightly bound in his fleece-lined suit that he had difficulty in moving around, was McCawley—the same McCawley they later found dead on a bobbing rubber raft in the Atlantic. Mac peered at the crew quizzically as they gave the plane a last going over. Apparently satisfied, he stole a boyish glance around, sat down on the grass and from the folds of his thick suit pulled two pints

of Scotch whisky. In less than twenty minutes Mac downed that Scotch. He pushed away intruders and refused to give anybody a drink.

"I'm going to see this take-off in utter silence," he laughed. "Don't tell me a thing that happened!"

Don Teel, George Carlisle, Joe Silverthorn and I held a quick huddle. Silverthorn was to co-pilot. It is rather embarrassing to report now, but we planned some rather ugly things in that huddle.

Blunt-talking Silverthorn whispered: "Nothing will happen on this take-off. I'll keep one hand on the master switch and the other on the fire extinguisher. If Stuart goes haywire, I'll jerk the switch, use the extinguisher on him and take over. That is, if I have to."

The only thought we had as we piled into the blindness of the bomb bay was the natural one: would we be the third in the cycle of mishaps? The three-in-a-row superstition had some support among those men in the bomber belly.

Some of us had stop watches in our hands as the motors were revved up. We were all professional pilots and we knew exactly how long it would take for the airplane to make its run and lift into the air. Not that we could do anything about it, but we wanted the consolation of having held a watch at our wake! But, there was Joe Silverthorn up there and we felt better about that.

I'm confident that a Liberator with such a load as we

carried that night never came off a runway as fast as we did. The take-off was slightly ahead of our stop watches. We began breathing again when we heard the big ship settle down as it climbed, then headed into one of the worst trips I ever made across the Atlantic.

None of us was comfortable. It was icily cold and the darkness didn't help. The wind blew and somewhere it knifed into cracks in the plane and appeared to settle on our exposed noses. Night rides over the Atlantic, sitting on the board floor of a bomber, aren't the latest in luxury travel. One by one the pilots around me fell asleep. I noticed it was a deep sleep, that the snoring was unusually loud. I began to get dreamily groggy. Next to me sat Pat Christie, famous Canadian fighter pilot. He was breathing heavily, out cold.

Then it dawned on me. We must be up to 20,000 feet, fighting the ice and the storm. The plane was lurching and I could hear the sleet bouncing off the sides of the plane. We were up there without oxygen masks!

I summoned all the strength in my body, shook my head hard, and began crawling up front. Finally I made it, slid open the trap door to the crew compartment and screamed up: "For God's sake, take it down! Those guys back there are out cold."

The entire crew—pilot, co-pilot and engineer—had put on oxygen masks. They had been fighting ice and storm for three hours. Ice was two inches thick on the windshield;

they had forgotten everything but keeping the plane in the air. Sheets of lightning danced eerily in the skies, lighting the interior of the ship. The flight engineer crawled down to me, held an emergency mask over my nose for three or four deep breaths and I felt all right again. I climbed to the front end, jerked on a mask and breathed for a moment. Outside, the wing tips, loaded with ice, were bouncing with a two-foot play, bending back and forth under the weight.

"Looks like the last flight," I heard Joe Silverthorn say.

I agreed.

Slowly Captain Stuart began to let the plane down to get some oxygen to the stunned pilots in the belly. We got down to 7,000 feet and they all came around, what with some air and the masks. First there was cursing, then muttered prayers and thanks. No one was hurt.

Three and a half hours went by—hours of lightning, ice, and winds screaming in a weird inferno. The plane seemed to be standing still. It was the Atlantic at its worst. Finally, we knew we were approaching Newfoundland, but we couldn't see for the iced-up windows and could get no radio bearings. Snow and ice static made everything else impossible.

Newfoundland was closed in. We didn't want to land on somebody's mountain, nose first, so we checked the fuel supply and decided to stretch the nightmare on into Montreal.

"How in the hell did I ever get into this business?" I quipped to Silverthorn.

"Don't know, Ed," he answered, "but this is a hell of a time to think of getting out of it. Wait until we feel those wheels rolling on something solid."

Once we were over Newfoundland, we got radio ranges in Canada. We were out of the ice, but we were still on instruments and praying that our fuel would hold out for the final lap. Dog-tired, Captain Stuart was napping over in his seat and Silverthorn had dragged back to the bomb bay to catch a cat nap. I took over and it wasn't too long before Pat Christie, who had moved up with me, shouted the word I'd been waiting to hear: "Montreal ahead!"

Captain Stuart bounced awake, took the controls and brought us into St. Hubert's airport. It was 10 A.M. when we landed and never have I seen a prettier sight than that airdrome. I wanted to kiss the ground. So did fifteen other men aboard the strange looking plane, which still had a great coating of ice over its broad back when we landed.

It had been a date with hell—eighteen hours and fifteen minutes long. The gas was stretched to the limit.

Marge Teel was there and I noticed Don held her a little tighter than usual that morning. I hopped in a car with the Teels and didn't even bother to clean up before we got to the food that had been denied us for the past eighteen hours. I ate the biggest steak in Montreal.

We wondered what to say when we saw the wives of

Chapter

6

OF THE forty-four transocean flights I made before stepping out of the ferry service temporarily, my third was the one that took me nearest to death.

The thrill was still new and I was a little nervous when I made that third trip over the northern route in a Lockheed-Hudson twin-engine bomber. Late in the afternoon of departure day, I called my navigator, an English youngster named Sims who had recently completed his RAF training, and my radio operator, a mellow Canadian lad named Phillips. It is good to know, as intimately as possible, the traits and characteristics of your crew members, so I had them come over to the apartment to help route our flight.

We spent several hours with maps spread on the floor, checking every detail minutely. We didn't miss a thing. I checked my navigator's knowledge of dead reckoning, conversion angles and radio bearings. Carefully I looked to see that he had marked in his notebook all beacons and radio stations from which we could obtain bearings. These rug conferences are held by most captains before every

transoceanic flight. It is a healthy thing—helps morale and enables the commander of the ship to know something about his crew. I knew that my crew wanted to know something about me; crewmen must depend on their skipper as much as he depends on them.

We drank the usual toast—a coke. Alcoholic drinks were forbidden twenty-four hours before a flight. A few hours later, we met at the airdrome. On this trip we carried extra gas tanks; the bomb bays were sealed and filled with fuel. I stood there and watched every drop of gasoline go into the plane. We checked the tires ourselves and nosed around the plane as last-minute checks were made. Sabotage did exist, and even though such instances were rare, men didn't head out over the Atlantic without seeing to it personally that every precaution was taken. So precious was gasoline on those trips that even after warming the engines I refueled again. Not a drop was to be wasted. Every ounce counted.

The weather was explained to us studiously by McTaggart Cowan, a British meteorologist at our jumping-off point in Newfoundland, and one of the best weathermen in the world for my money. He pointed to the charts in his serious manner and showed us bluntly where we would encounter a "tough front," a bad storm, that night. Coolly, he predicted the spot where, as he put it, the ice would be its bloody worst.

We wandered around our hop-off point, for a bit.

Take-off time came. Seventeen planes left that night and several of them never reached the other side.

"Quite a smooth trip so far, Captain," Phil mused, after the first couple of hours. "What about your first two trips across? Were they very rough?"

"Phil, any time a pilot has a smooth flight on this route, let me know," I told him.

Three hours out and I spotted Cowan's "tough front." Black, ominous clouds bounced around us. I knew the struggle was on. No co-pilot up there on that trip, only a couple of kids, a navigator and a radioman.

"Hey, take it easy, baby," I said aloud to myself as the plane began bobbing.

"Anything wrong, sir?" Phil queried anxiously.

"Yeah, better get Sims up here in front. Strap yourselves in, both of you. Mighty nasty looking weather ahead. This is going to be ugly."

"Looks like it's closing in fast," Phil said. "Think you can climb over it?"

"We're at 11,000 now," I answered. "Hang on to your hats, boys, here it comes."

Ice, sleet and a wild wind began to beat the sides of the plane. I climbed up to 18,000 feet. We put on oxygen masks. The weather not only got no better, it was worse and the rattle of ice began to get on our nerves.

"Sounds like a machine gun, doesn't it?" Phil ventured in a husky voice.

"Yeah, and just about as dangerous, too. Turn on those prop de-icers."

The plane began staggering. Sims, making his first flight, was frightened. He was only eighteen and this initiation was a rough one.

"Phil," I shouted over the noise, "brace your feet against that instrument panel. It's bouncing so damn bad I can't read the air speed."

I knew I had to come down. We were flying as slowly as the ship would cruise, as we did on all flights, to conserve gasoline. We began to lose altitude at the rate of 800 feet per minute. I could feel the plane getting heavier. Ice was coating us everywhere. The windshield was a frozen chunk.

"Sims, stick your spotlight out the window and let me know if the ice is beginning to build up on the wing," I ordered.

Before he could tug the side window free, I knew the answer.

"Captain, ice is building up over the de-icer boots," Sims reported. "It looks bad as hell. They're not doing any good at all."

I shouted to Sims to come back and brace his feet against the bobbing instrument panel.

"Look at the air speed," I yelled. "I've got the throttles wide open and the props full forward, and still we're losing

800 feet a minute. Phil, turn on full carburetor heat, both engines!"

Those two kids were looking to me for help. I was scared as hell myself. I wondered how I had ever let myself get into such a jam, why I had gone into this fool business of ferrying planes over the ocean. I was mad at myself and I had a queer feeling around the throat when I thought of home. As the plane went on losing altitude, I even began to envision the scene when Mother would be informed of my disappearance.

It was against all common sense, but I had to push those throttles wider and shove the props in full low pitch. It was tripling my gasoline consumption and two-engine bombers carry very little excess fuel on an ocean hop, but I had no alternative.

The props were spinning at 2,000 revolutions per minute, but still they picked up ice and kept it. I closed and opened the engines, trying to snap that death load off the props. Ice chunks flew and hit the fuselage with the sound of a machine-gun barrage.

Phil screamed: "Sir, look at our altitude; we're down to two thousand. God, are we going to hit the ocean?"

"Any minute, maybe," I told him grimly. "That altimeter, you know, can be a thousand feet wrong, up or down, and we'd never know it. Sims, have you got the pressure reading?"

"No, Captain, we don't have a reading for this zone."

The ice houses on the de-icer boots of the wings had built up to a staggering size. The de-icers had lost their punch, and were puffing idly inside the ice houses. It looked like the last flight, so I decided on the last possible chance—to shut off both engines until we got as low as I dared take the plane, possibly 800 feet by our altimeter, and then blast both engines wide open suddenly. It was our only hope for getting ice off the props and out of the carburetors. The constant sucking of air and gas into those carburetors had refrigerated the motor completely.

"Maybe this is it," I told the two kids, "but it's the last chance. I'm going to throttle both engines. When we get down to 800 feet, I'll give 'em everything."

"Down to a thousand feet, sir," Sims panted.

"A little more to go yet," I almost whispered.

"Nine hundred. . . ."

"I hope those goddam engines take!"

"Eight hundred. . . ."

"O. K., boys, here goes nothing! Hang on and brace your feet against the panel."

I opened both engines wide. It was one hell of a roar. It sounded like every noise I had ever heard rolled into one thunderclap. Great chunks of ice flew off the props. The plane vibrated and staggered for fully two minutes. We prayed in a profane sort of way. Finally the airplane

righted itself and began to sound normal again. We were still on instruments and I wasn't certain of the altitude. The ocean could have been fifteen feet below us, for all we knew.

Gradually, almost to a maddening degree, we gained altitude at about 100 feet a minute. It was warmer down below and the ice started ripping off. We got back to 2,000 feet after an eternity.

"Brother, she's climbing now," Phil shrieked.

"Yeah, looks pretty thin up ahead, too," I answered. "God, I thought we were going to swim that time."

"I did too," sighed young Sims. "How about a cup of coffee now, Captain?"

We could see the ocean, finally, and even that was a relief. Phil mumbled that he guessed the worst part of the trip was over. I wasn't so sure. We checked our gas and discovered that we had more than doubled our consumption during that forty-five minutes of hell. I didn't have the heart or the guts to tell those two kids, but I believed that only a miracle would get us to land.

"Phil," I said, rather apologetically, "we're lost and we've dropped a lot of gasoline. Let's not get too optimistic about this thing. Try to get master control on the radio. Get anything! Get somebody!"

But nothing was available. Phil tried for an hour, doing the best he could, but the Germans were jamming the air. They jammed us constantly with the letters "B-U-M." I

never knew whether they were just calling us bums or what they were up to.

"Might as well throw the damn thing overboard," I finally shouted to Phil. The kid broke down and cried.

We had made a careful estimated-time-of-arrival into a rocky promontory on the northernmost tip of Ireland. As we approached what we thought must have been our ETA, I began silently sweating out the gas supply. I watched it constantly. Dawn came and we broke into a clear layer of flaky clouds. It would have been a lovely sight on any other day; I only cursed it that morning.

"Luck on that radio yet?" I questioned again.

"Not a thing," Phil said. "I'm trying to get a loop bearing, but I can't pick up one anywhere."

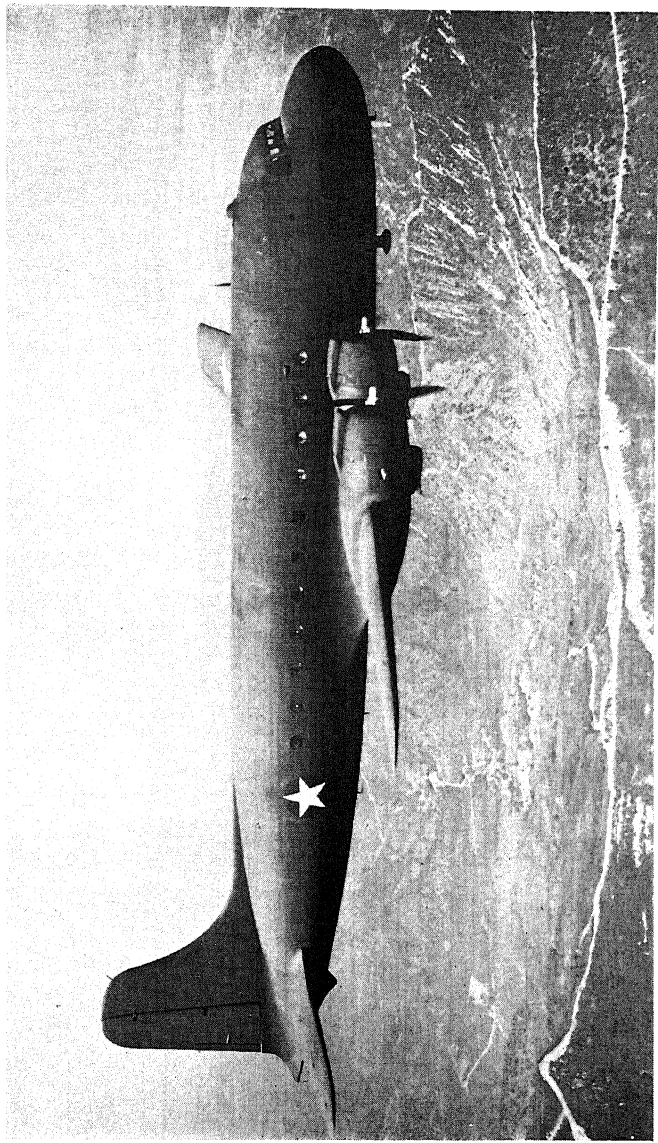
"Try again. Don't quit trying!"

"God knows I'm trying, Captain," Phil said, "but nobody answers."

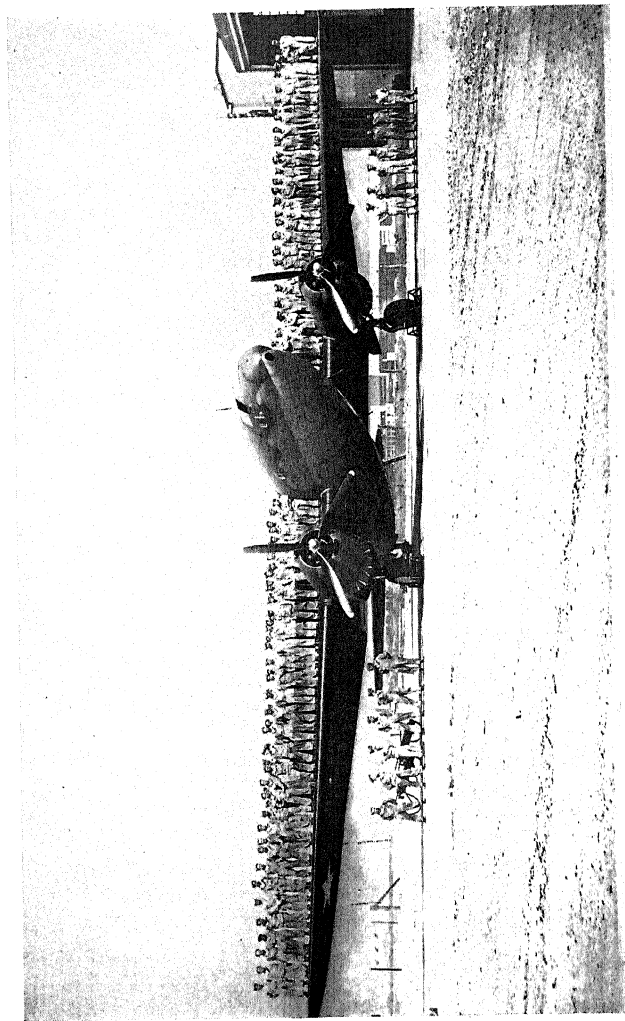
Our gasoline was dangerously low. No one knew how far off course we were. Still no radio bearings—nothing but the droning of the plane and those mockingly beautiful clouds.

"Forget the radio, Phil," I said. "I'm going to try something else. It may not work, but we've got to gamble again."

I had my own pet way of letting down in Scotland. It was impossible to come down blindly over there. Balloon barrages towering thousands of yards into the skies were



Douglas C-54 combat transport, known as the "Skymaster," used on the world-wide routes of the Air Transport Command.



Another transport type, the C-46, or Curtiss "Commando," is world's largest twin-engined plane. The more than 100 men standing on its wings are Transport Command mechanics.

plain death if you smacked into them. Mountains were numerous—and we could see nothing but fleecy cloud banks.

I feared two things: running out of gasoline, and catching a tail wind in that blind wilderness that would blow us into occupied France. It was time to take a desperate chance.

"I'm going to make a 90-degree turn," I shouted to the crew. "I know we've passed our ETA. I'm taking a chance as the last hope. We'll fly straight south; at least we won't be flying into France."

Three minutes passed.

"Our petrol is almost gone," Sims said.

"O. K., hold on. We're going down!"

At that moment a rock formation jutted up ahead of us through the overcast.

"Let's get under this ceiling," I shouted.

I went down and God was with us. We found a hole in the clouds. We dived just like a fighter plane and came out over the ocean at 200 feet. I looked around and there was Malin Head, our original point of arrival, off the shoreline. Visibility was limited to a quarter of a mile and we crept along the coastline and into Prestwick.

"Don't give up now, fellows," I shouted to the two kids as the gasoline needle quit moving. It was a guessing game, from minute to minute, whether we would make the landing field.

We did make it, and came in with a good landing. I turned the plane to taxi in, the motors sputtered and she went dead on the runway. Not a drop of gasoline left! Sounds a little on the storybook side, but it was too true to suit three boys who were very tired from fighting a pretty big ocean.

And that, friends, is why my temples are gray at twenty-nine.

Chapter

7

THE old hotel, operated by a young Scotch lassie named Miss Gray, was home for us when we landed at Prestwick after a transatlantic run, and walked across the good, solid earth to its porch.

Immediately after landing, we would march into the hotel lobby, where the usual long row of customs officials waited for us. First, a representative of the British Ministry of Aircraft Production took all papers given us before the Newfoundland take-off and burned them. Then the meteorologist took the logs we had made as we came over. He questioned us in minutest detail. Sometimes it was hard to go back over the happenings of a tough trip, but the meteorologist had to get information to cable back accurate forecasts to Newfoundland. We gave him the levels at which we found icing, where the front had been roughest, winds, clouds and similar data. All this information would be extremely important to the next pilot along the route.

The passport man, a kindly old gentleman who had won the affection of every American airman because of his

understanding, never raised his head as he questioned seriously: "You have the usual one hundred cigarettes?"

As seriously we nodded our "Yes, sirs."

When the customs formalities were finished, we would head wearily for bed. Often the hotel reported that its deluxe rooms (mattresses on the floors) were occupied and we had to go to the annex, a former vegetable cellar.

Breakfast on the following morning was about what Britons were getting in those dark days: fried tomatoes, hot English mustard and fried toast. Mutton occasionally appeared at other meals, but the mustard was one item never absent at any meal. Sometimes I wondered if it wasn't included purposely to drown the taste of everything else with its blistering bite.

The food situation was mitigated for us by the exploits of Ed Higgins, of New York, a fellow I think you'd like to know. Ed was a grinning little chap with a crew haircut who had earned a tremendous reputation with Pan-American as a co-pilot and navigator on its big Clippers. Our meals became better as soon as Ed had cultivated the friendship of an old Scotsman near Prestwick. These two cronies indulged in a mutually favored sport, rabbit hunting. Higgins, a wizard with the sextant, was equally adept at bagging rabbits.

None of us will forget the day he first displayed his talents. It was just before dusk and most of us were occupied with our chief diversion in Prestwick—croquet. Hard-

boiled flyers, lining up a shot through the middle wicket, sighted Ed Higgins coming over the hill, three rabbits dangling at his side and a silly grin twisting his mouth.

"Good God, meat! Real American meat!" one of the croquet players yelled, as he loped off in Ed's direction.

"I'll take the little one," someone else called.

The stampede was on. They poured all over Ed and he hugged the trio of rabbits to his chest and dropped to the ground. Finally we made a "draw straws" deal and the boys released him.

But Higgins was no chump. He went straight to the kitchen and made a bargain. He promised the chef that he would give him one of the rabbits if he would cook the other two. By an odd coincidence, I drew the lucky straw and Ed and I sat down to that marvelous rabbit dinner while the others grumbled over the rations they had brought across on their planes. Naturally, I deny that my close friendship with Ed had anything to do with the lucky draw I made that night. Mere coincidence.

This story, however, is only a minor incident in the Higgins career. No ordinary handler of planes, he got into a rut as a co-pilot on the B-24's shuttling back and forth between Canada and Scotland. Once he had ferried the two-engine bombers, but the British shifted him to the big planes as co-pilot. Ed didn't like it. It was about the time that we began ferrying the four-engine bombers across and there was a scramble by all the pilots for the few big

bombers available. It meant more airplane, fewer dangers and the thrill of jockeying a giant.

Ed was left off the list of pilots to be checked out on the big stuff and it hurt him deeply. They told him he didn't have enough experience as a pilot. That was too much for him to swallow and he insisted so vigorously that they agreed to give him a checkout. He was turned over to Russ West, our assistant instructor at Montreal, who gave him an excellent flight report. But through formalities and other delays, they continued to hold up final approval because of his alleged lack of experience as a pilot.

Shortly before Pearl Harbor, Ed resigned and came home to Long Island. He didn't stay long. When the Japs struck, he entered on a career in the Army Air Force. A graduate of Randolph and Kelly fields and holder of a reserve commission, Ed was assigned eventually to the Air Transport Command because of his experience on the oceanic routes. He built himself a reputation as a flying fool in the Ferry Command, piloting every type of plane to the earth's farthest corners. Once he flew a B-17 from a base in the United States to New Delhi, India, in ninety-seven hours. That was only a warmup for one of the war's truly incredible ferrying flights. He came home, got into another B-17 and flew from the United States to India in sixty-seven hours. For that flight he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Months after that exploit, I ran into Ed in Natal, Brazil. He was the same old character—needing a shave, forgetting to wear his rank bars, an old cap crammed low over his head, and a .45 swinging from his hip. Today, as a captain in the Army Air Force, he flies the toughest of all the aerial runs—over the 18,000-foot ranges of the Burma Road route. This is the man the RAF said couldn't fly four-engine bombers across the Atlantic because he lacked experience!

Shortly before Ed Higgins left our north route gang, I was in Montreal checking out new pilots between ferry trips. Some were airline flyers, some old barnstormers with much experience, some RCAF youngsters who were to make one crossing to get overseas. There were two French pilots.

Regardless of previous experience and ability, pilots are given thorough check flights before being sent out over the Atlantic. After rigid ground training, they are taken to the hangar to get the feel of the plane and then are shown how to use oxygen equipment, the Aldis signaling lamp, Very pistols, emergency escapes, and the operation of the automatic pilot. Even though he may be bored by it all, the pilot is shown once more how to operate and make use of every piece of equipment in the plane.

The report is made and soon the final checkout hour is at hand. The pilot reports to the flying training department, where the chief flying instructor assigns him to an

instructor. Usually the first hours are spent in acquainting the pilot with the peculiarities of the plane—finding the multiple controls and learning how to operate them.

Practice landings and take-offs—dull but extremely important—come next and then follows the business of taking the pilot up to 3,000 or 4,000 feet and showing him the correct procedure in the event of an engine failure. This phase is vitally important, because if one engine fails on a twin-engine bomber while in flight with a full transatlantic load, only the correct procedure will bring the plane safely to port.

Next comes the most important step of all. A hood is put up and the pilot's ability to fly by instruments is checked. It is essential that he learn to fly a straight course within five degrees and within an altitude variation of 100 feet. Precision turns, gliding turns and climbing must be accomplished satisfactorily, both with and without the use of the artificial horizon and directional gyro.

The final step comes after the Link trainer test. The pilot must plot a course to a point one hundred miles away and return. He begins with the assumption of a dead calm, flying contact. Fifteen or twenty minutes later he must find a wind by visual fix, using his computer. After setting a new course for his turning point, he is put under the hood. Then he must fly instruments to his turning point and back. The dirty part of the deal comes somewhere on the return flight when the instructor cuts an engine and

from there in it is up to the pilot to make himself a captain. He is commissioned only upon his skill and accuracy in computing, and his general flying ability.

This is the kind of checking out that I was doing in Montreal.

One day seven RCAF pilots who had just completed intensive training appeared at the base for checkout flights before taking the overseas jump. Fresh out of the Hudson command, they were not in the ferry group but were merely to take a ship across. We checked them carefully and found they knew the plane and were better than fair pilots.

But one, a flight lieutenant whom I won't identify, appeared extremely nervous about the possibility of a plane's stalling out. I had him up one morning teaching him short landings, a precautionary approach that would permit an emergency landing in bad weather in some little old hay-field. We made two that were fair enough and I was fairly well relaxed on the third when suddenly he dipped right into the edge of the runway. I don't know why, but he shut off the power at thirty feet and the heavy ship simply dropped from under us and slammed down on the right wheel.

I jerked forward and pulled the throttles wide open. After one bounce, we began climbing. I took a quick look outside at the landing gear and found what I suspected: it was badly bent. Taking the plane away from the lieuten-

ant, I lifted the landing gear, got up to 4,000 feet and went through the regular emergency procedure for a stuck gear. I closed the hydraulic valves and pumped down the gears manually. Then we radioed down to the tower that we had a smashed gear and wanted a clear field. I told them to haul out the fire truck, that we were coming in for a crash landing.

There were six in the plane, including Ed Higgins, who appeared to be enjoying it all. The tower radioed to stand by at 1,000 feet and circle for instructions. We had a fairly full load of gasoline and for the next five hours I circled the airport. Meanwhile, a covey of experts settled in the control tower and gave us advice.

"Good God," Ed roared, "why don't they just line up at the mike down there and take turns telling us how to fly an airplane?"

"You can expect anything, Ed," I told him. "We've been told everything now but the latest British table etiquette."

Word got around about our plight, and as we circled the field, we could see the throng of spectators growing. Stenographers dropped their work at field desks, civilians and ground personnel gathered until we had a good-sized mob of about 2,000 persons crowding fences and roofs, waiting patiently for us to make our crash landing. With the transatlantic tanks we carried, there was an excellent chance for an explosion and fire when we made contact with the ground. Obviously, no one wanted to miss it.

Occasionally I would dive down directly over the tower to ask the condition of the landing gear. It gave the people inside the willies. Static poured into the radio and we couldn't get their instructions too well. Sometimes they had to repeat five or six times before their words became understandable. I thought it was static, but on the sixth conversation with the tower I was certain I heard correctly when some bright fellow down below told us to come down and bounce along the runway on one wheel to get the other one down. Ed Higgins was in the co-pilot's seat when this piece of advice came through.

"Not with me in this airplane," he shrieked. "Just take me back up to 2,000 feet and I'll bail out and watch this little show from the ground."

The greatest danger in landing is to try it on one wheel. If both wheels are up, it isn't so bad, but that one-legged landing is no boy's job. I turned to the crew and asked them if they wanted to bail out, but they elected to stay with the plane.

Over Ed's protests, I followed instructions and came down that runway at 150 miles per hour, bouncing on one wheel. It wasn't fun. The last bounce barely crow-hopped us over a fire truck and we went upstairs again.

I decided to follow my own instructions for awhile. I pumped all the gas from the bomb bay tanks to the wing tanks, to dump it below. Gasoline went streaming out of the wing ducts and the procedure of transferring the fuel

became tedious. At last we got the bomb bay tanks dry and then we had to fly at a perfectly straight level. This is an old flying rule: Never turn or come back while dumping fuel or you will fly into your own gasoline and possibly explode. The radio had to be shut off because the antenna was hanging back.

All except twenty-two gallons of gasoline on the inside wing tank had been drained when I switched on the radio again and informed the tower that I was coming in for a belly landing. That started another argument. Some wanted me to land in the dirt, others on the concrete. There were arguments both ways.

I exploded into the mike: "I'm going to land on the northeast-southwest runway. If O. K., just say Roger."

Somebody said Roger, I think, but in any event I went out about three miles and approached the landing strip. The plane was only inches off the ground, under power, with all the occupants in the back of the ship on the floor. I yelled to Ed to hold his hand on the master switch and cut it. It was one of the smoothest landings I ever made. Fire trucks raced down the runways and the crowd screamed.

No one was hurt. As for the plane, the props were bent a little and the bomb bay doors were scratched.

The airport manager brought a quart of Scotch out to the ship. It didn't last long.

Chapter

8

TRANSOCEANIC flights never become completely routine. Weather, distance and the natural respect a pilot has for the ocean keep him from going to sleep on the job. Nevertheless, flying the northern route got to be a rut for me after a time. Sometimes I pondered the pledge Ed Higgins and I had made, that when one left the North Atlantic run, the other would quit, too. Not long after Ed departed, a series of mishaps broke up the monotony and crystallized my feelings in the matter.

Planes arriving at the take-off point from Montreal seldom encounter weather delays that keep them grounded more than two or three days, but on one occasion I had been grounded forty-eight hours and was waiting for the fronts to dissolve when the report came in that Bob Perlick had met trouble. He had been forced down. In attempting a take-off, Perlick had swerved across the runway on the take-off and his plane burned to ashes. Bob, small and agile, had scrambled out of the mess and was unhurt.

That incident recalled the day when Bob, starting from Los Angeles on the Bendix transcontinental race, had

cheated death in much the same manner. He was piloting a Beechcraft loaded with extra gas tanks built up to the cabin roof. The landing gear collapsed on his take-off, but he jumped out alive as the plane burned.

Perlick's latest escape, however, worried his fellow ferry pilots. Such accidents always worried them, because on every flight the plane would be jammed to the limit with fuel that was likely to make the ship sway slightly on the take-off run, and there was also the possibility that the landing gear would collapse under the terrific load.

On the night of Perlick's accident, the grounded pilots killed time with a crap game. Sometimes these games went on all night. Tall, gangling Tom Livermore was there on this occasion, addressing the dice in the old school manner, and so was P. W. Gray, of Boston, who provided a sharp contrast with his well-bred admonitions. On the fringe of the game, watching intently, was Wing Commander Mulholland, an RAF flyer. The room was dimly lighted and he squinted quizzically as the dice bounded into the wall.

"Eighter from Decatur!" Livermore boomed.

"Really, old man," Mulholland whispered to me, "I don't quite understand what the fellows are up to."

"Sometimes I wonder myself," I quipped.

But slowly, under my amateurish tutoring, Mulholland got the general idea of the game and at last asked timidly for permission to squeeze into the circle. His first point was a little unfortunate—a four.

"I say, old boy, let's have Little Joe," he stuttered, as he rolled the dice. The answer was a six-ace. On through the night he played, cajoling the dice with his new vocabulary until the Americans rubbed aching sides over his correct pleas for correct behavior.

Next morning the weather cleared and we were ordered to prepare for take-offs. Commander Mulholland stood on the runway in front of me, still a trifle bewildered by the strange American indoor sport he had learned the night before. He revved his motors and started his run. Halfway down the run, his landing gear buckled and the plane spun wildly. I don't know how they did it, but Mulholland and his two crew members tumbled out of the ship as flames shot into the air.

The wreck was still there, a roaring, potential funeral pyre as I shot past it on my take-off. Somehow I couldn't forget the sight as I winged out to sea. Bob Perlick yesterday, Mulholland today, and last week Jim Williams, a fine Canadian lad who had taken his checkout flights with me, had been killed with his entire crew on a take-off.

I made the trip uneventfully, but when I got back again, I decided to carry out my end of the bargain with Ed Higgins. I quit the northern route. There were other reasons for quitting, of course. The extreme weather of those latitudes had aggravated sinus ailments of long standing, and there had been appealing letters from some of my friends who had resigned to go with Pan-American's south-

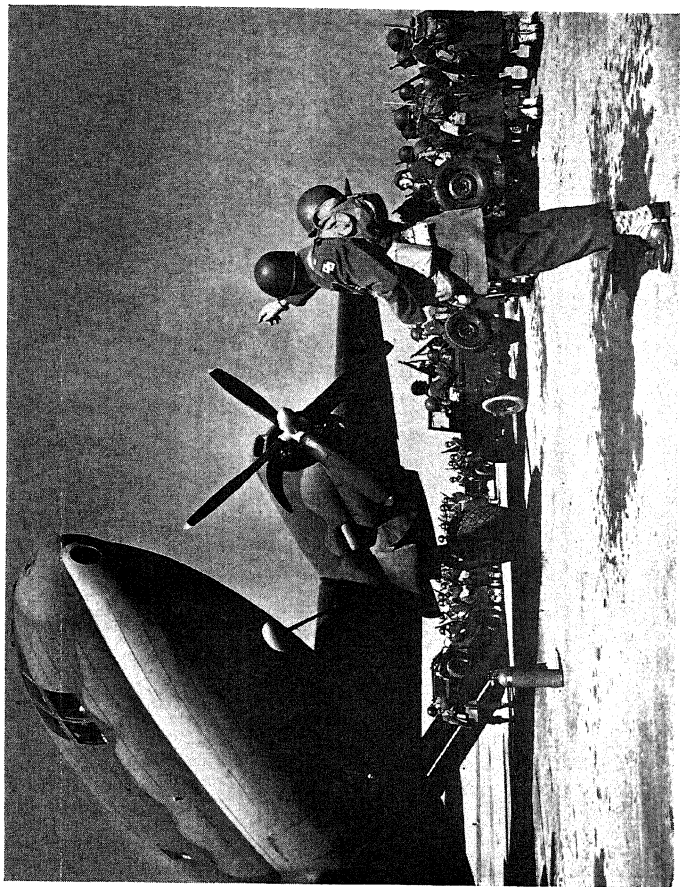
ern route to Africa. These letters spoke of warm sunshine, of beaches where coconuts dangled and dropped at your feet, of bathing suits and suntan. I gathered my belongings, went to New York, and began another strange experience—flying the South Atlantic.

The Pan-American office in New York hired me and sent me along to Miami, Florida, the southern base. I arrived there, looked up Frank Hankins, operations manager for Pan-American, and began the same training routine I had experienced in Canada.

It was strange, after months of flying the ocean in ice and sleet, of battling Scottish fogs and balloon barrages, of encountering almost every flying danger known to man, to be placed in what amounted to a kindergarten and to be treated like an infant again. But that is the practice. I dropped from my former attractive salary to \$10 a day and started the checkout period.

The first day was a grand reunion with Joe Silverthorn, Steve Wedge and other old friends who were now in the Pan-American fold. Then came my first check ride in a twin-engine Lockheed, and back to the drudgery of ground school, which turned out to be one of the finest technical schools in the country, with top instructors and the latest in flying methods.

One of Pan-American's requirements, embarrassing to a transatlantic veteran, is that new pilots must make their



Jeeps, paratroops, light artillery and virtually all kinds of supplies can be loaded into the "Commando" for transfer to fighting fronts.



Hydraulic equipment loads war supplies rapidly into a "Commando" at an Air Transport Command base.

first trip as a co-pilot. This means co-pilot's pay and a quiet ride on the right side of the crew cabin. My first southern jaunt was to be as Steve Wedge's co-pilot. If I had to be a co-pilot, I thought, a trip with Steve was the best way to take the dose. Wedge was a six-foot-three giant, only twenty-three years old, who weighed nearly two hundred pounds. He came from West Virginia, and continually kidded me about being a damyankee. I had a tremendous respect for his ability; he was one of the best pilots I ever knew.

I spent most of the time during the checkout period getting antitetanus, typhoid, cholera and yellow fever shots. Pan-American, thorough in all respects, appeared to take every precaution for the protection of its pilots; nothing was left undone to assure absolute safety for a pilot's life, up to the point where everything else depended on the pilot and the plane.

Steve and I were to take a Douglas C-53 military transport to Accra, on the Gold Coast of West Africa. The big twin-engine cargo plane, a military version of the familiar American airliner, was a good ship. Pan-Am's engineering department set up intricate charts for us, indicating the best climbing speed of the plane with a transatlantic load, and the best manifold pressure and revolution-per-minute setting on the props. The charts detailed minutely how the weight of the plane would decrease with the length

of the flight. Such data were compiled to give us the maximum range of the plane, not the speed. On transoceanic flights, range is the chief worry.

On December 7, 1941, I whiled away the final hours before my first southern flight, lolling on Miami Beach. Then my portable radio brought the flash from Pearl Harbor, knifing into those peaceful hours. My first thought was whether I should go into the Army Air Forces, but a sober second thought reminded me that my new job was pretty important, too. There was a sizable task ahead on the southern route and I had been trained particularly for that kind of flying. I felt that the Army would take over the ferrying service eventually, and meanwhile I could do my bit in it anyway.

Next day we prepared for the flight to Africa.

The first chore is to make a pre-departure fuel consumption and mechanical test flight. It takes from four to five hours and calls for extremely precise flying. It is a practice flight, but is performed in exactly the same manner as flying an ocean. First comes the take-off and the climb at a certain specified horsepower and speed until you reach approximately 9,000 feet. Then you throttle back to the cruising setting you would use on a transatlantic flight.

Our trial run was made towards Cuba. It was necessary to maintain a precise altitude and indicated air speed. The purpose of the flight was to look for mechanical defects, check the course, fuel and oil consumption, and to give

the crew a chance to work together and become accustomed to certain idiosyncrasies that sometimes make a big difference on a long, overwater flight. The navigator, as he would on a transatlantic run, took bearings constantly, got his cross-fixes and plotted his position. He gave us estimated times of arrival and knew everything about our objectives.

This flight brought home to us how efficiently Pan-American was ferrying warplanes to our allies in the Middle Eastern theater. It made a man feel that every possible check had been made to assure a safe flight over the Atlantic.

By the time we got back to our base in Miami, we knew the ship perfectly and the captain had been able to determine the ability of his crew. We kept a *How Goes It?* chart to turn in to the engineering department. It was detailed and listed every minor ailment, such as a cylinder head temperature running high on the number one engine, or a little roughness in the right magneto on one of the engines.

Take-offs were made at night from Miami, partly because of the availability of celestial navigation and the advantage of a cool, comfortable and less turbulent trip. Most of the planes were unarmed. Some of the bombers carried bullet clips in the machine guns. The pilots were issued standard .45-caliber revolvers, and parachute jungle packs containing a jungle kit, machete, jungle knife, snake serum, quinine, mosquito net and rations. We checked the life rafts for

CO₂ bottles, and for proper stowage, then examined the emergency radio set and the emergency rations. These checkups were most thorough; they could mean the difference between life and death in case of a forced landing.

Each plane carried a huge cardboard container of emergency rations, including cartons of cigarettes, chocolate bars, dozens of cans of fruit juices, boxes of crackers, sealed cans of candy, concentrated cocoa and such items. Life preservers, the famed Mae Wests, were checked to be certain that there was one for each crew member. We cautioned the crew to wear these jackets any time we flew lower than 5,000 feet over water. They were placed where they could be reached quickly. We inventoried signal flares, rockets, Very pistols, signaling lamps and guns. At least one shotgun was standard equipment for jungle flying. Side arms were worn or else carried close enough to be seized if the crew had to bail out. First-aid kits and oxygen bottles were also given a going over.

The parachutes were most important of all. It was imperative to be sure there were enough chutes for every crew member. We cautioned the men again that parachutes and harnesses were useless if they were scattered over the plane. Most air crews abuse their parachute equipment because they are so familiar with it. We made every member of our crew try on his harness to be certain of proper fit. Then each one was marked with a crayon to identify it. It was a rule of our own that chute harnesses had to be worn

constantly, unless the plane was over water. We drummed it into the crew: never let anyone use or misplace your harness or chute, and never stack chutes in a pile. Occasionally it was a good idea to pull out the packing slip to determine whether the chute had been packed within the past sixty days.

Finally, spare parts were loaded into the plane, particularly extra fuses, and the night of departure came. Final checks were made in the pitch darkness of the field. Crew members watched every ounce going into the plane. Last minute checks were made to be certain the rubber rafts and emergency portable radio transmitter were aboard. We crawled on the wings and personally watched every drop of gasoline and oil drip into the big ship. We tinkered with the radio, and for the hundredth time, the navigator checked his armful of maps.

In the midst of these preparations, wives came into the pilots' house for a farewell and a good-luck kiss. Then at last the final briefing in the meteorologist's office, and we were ready for the take-off.

It was midnight and we were the third plane out. We told Kathie, Steve's wife, that she would know us by watching for our left landing light to flick twice. We were off at midnight and soon climbed to 8,000 feet. We flew over Cuba's inky blackout, setting a straight course for Trinidad. We settled down and had to worry only about the 11,000-foot Hispaniola Mountain range, which was almost di-

rectly on our course. Forty-five minutes before we reached it, we went upstairs to 12,000 feet and used a little oxygen.

"I've got a three-star fix into Trinidad," the navigator told Captain Wedge. "We're twenty miles north of course."

"O. K.," Steve sang back, "we'll be in there on the ball. Don't worry."

A lovely dawn caught us still over the ocean and just outside Trinidad. We made a gradual downhill run, trying to get down under the clouds before we hit it. We were coming in while almost paralleling the coast of Venezuela and we had to make a landfall at a narrow cut between Venezuela and the high mountains of Trinidad.

Normally, local storms and nasty weather prevail around Trinidad and it isn't well liked by the transatlantic ferry tourist. Visibility is usually poor and it takes considerable finesse to get into the airport without difficulty of some sort. The pilot must observe an extremely narrow corridor in order to avoid anti-aircraft fire, regardless of the appearance of the plane. Restrictions are rigid and must be followed. Gunners are in the high hills, ready to toss up ack-ack.

The airdrome is a one-runway affair. We slipped into the place without incident and left some members of the crew to supervise the refueling. Heat and the eight hours and fifteen minutes of night flying had left us exhausted, and after registering, we flopped into our tents for a long sleep under the friendly mosquito nets. Our take-off time

had been set for daybreak the following morning, so we wandered around that evening, took in a movie, heard the Calypso singers and rubbernecked at the lush beauty of the vegetation. Shortly before daybreak, Dave Canty, the Pan-American representative, gave us our codes for the day, and the weather to Belem, Brazil. We were scheduled for a nonstop flight.

Two routes led to Belem: a direct line across the jungles, or around the coast. Twin-engine flights made the coast route preferable, although it added ninety nautical miles to the jaunt, but it provided pilots with better visual fixes and made the chances of getting lost almost nil. In the event of engine failure, it gave you a beach where planes could be landed with a margin of safety. Even a crash landing in shallow surf was preferable to the dense Brazilian jungle. It was likely that distress signals would be picked up quickly on the coast.

With good weather predicted, we decided to take the short cut across the jungle. It was a five-hour flight over unbroken wilderness, which looked from the air like a great stretch of soft green moss. Actually it was a death trap of huge trees and impenetrable growths of vines threaded with streams and swamps impossible to see from the air. A thousand kinds of death were below us. While it wasn't impossible to escape death if forced down in the jungle, it was an experience no one wanted. Besides its jungle dangers, the direct route also provided a minimum

of check points and made navigation that much more uncertain.

But we made the jump all right, and landed in Belem.

Belem is no bargain, believe me. It is an unadorned airport on the edge of the jungle, on the Para River. We crawled from our plane, weary again, and climbed into one of the shakiest taxicabs in existence. The taxis in Belem range from ten-year-old jaloppies to the latest-model Fords and Chevrolets. The roads, however, haven't been classified for at least twenty years and their pockmarked state probably accounts for the weakened condition of the taxis.

The taxi drivers pulled the gears back on the machines and went rocketing down these questionable highways at top speed. They knew no English—only “stop” and “go”—and pretended they didn't know what we were saying back in the rear seat.

“Stop this thing,” I yelled, “and let me out. I'll walk the rest of the way. This damn thing is worse than any Atlantic flight.”

“I'll see that you get one with springs next time,” Steve promised. “You get used to every bump in the road in time.”

Between jerks, Steve told me that when you landed at Belem you checked your last will and testament, muttered a silent prayer, hollered “Casa Grande” and hung on. I didn't doubt it.

When we got to the outskirts of Belem, it was worse.

The city has traffic cops but they don't interfere with a driver's pleasure. We went tearing down the street and the cops smiled and waved at us as we roared past them in a tornado of dust.

Belem is a fair-sized city. Flying over it, you can see the mouth of the Amazon River, pouring miles of mud out into the ocean. The city is famous for women's alligator and crocodile shoes, and wild taxi rides. Its hot spot is Madame Zaza's, where southern route transatlantic flyers go to be properly initiated. We pushed down narrow cobblestone streets to Madame Zaza's, admiring as we walked the young girls who draped themselves in windows over the street. Most of them were childlike and gay; their laughter and song could be heard far down the street. Over and above this gaiety was the blare of Brazilian juke boxes, pouring different tunes from every doorway in a deafening cacophony.

Inside Madame Zaza's, we wound our way up a little flight of stairs to what would resemble any typical American beer joint. The popular drink was *guarana* and the natives asked for it as we would a coke. The girls there wore peasant skirts and bolero blouses; they all looked to be in their teens. They were content to sit and drink with you for hours, providing no more than their company. Unlike their American counterparts, they never approached a customer. The customer had to proposition *them*—but we confined our pleasures to window-shopping.

Early in the morning we left Madame Zaza's and piled back into our Casa Grande beds for what little sleep we could get before the dawn take-off for Natal, Brazil.

That trip was five hours over the densest country imaginable. It looked like a lush, green golf fairway. Then Natal—the jumping-off-place for transatlantic flights to Africa. It is there that you really begin to get particular about how your plane behaves. Jungles are bad enough, but the big water jump puts you in a mood to examine minutely everything aboard ship.

We taxied in to Mrs. Knab's place, an attractive home under contract to handle all ferry pilots in Natal. After settling ourselves, we got in the mood for the ocean hop by relaxing, seeing the sights, bargaining with the natives, and sleeping. We ran into a good many returning ferry pilots and pumped them dry of information about weather and other conditions, in anticipation of our own jaunt next day.

Most intriguing of all the attractions in Natal were the black market operators and native peddlers. The black marketers would pull you into dim alleys, pull up their pant legs, and display a complete line of knives strapped to their legs. We weighted ourselves down with watches, knives, guns and such items.

Natal was also the place where we had our mosquito boots made to order out of beautiful leather. Those mosquito boots were mandatory in the ferry pilot's wardrobe.

Loose-fitting, they came just above the ankles and warded off attacks by the malarial mosquito, a hard-biting fellow who never gets far off the ground.

We wandered around the Brazilian night spots, jammed with native sweater girls, and finally turned back to Mrs. Knab's for a few hours of sleep.

Next day, every piece of radio equipment was checked and set up for the proper frequencies to receive Natal tower, Ascension Island, and the African coastal stations. Once more the flight engineer crawled to the wings and watched every drop of fuel go into the tanks. He sealed the tanks personally, marked the date and affixed his signature.

The flight from Natal could be made to Dakar, or several other landing places on the African west coast, or it could be made with a stop at tiny Ascension Island, a dot in the Atlantic.

In those days, ferry pilots always made the trips at night because of the aid of celestial navigation. However, they never planned to arrive on the African coast before day-break because thick fog obscured the landing fields. A pilot rarely chose to make the run in daylight. Some did on occasion because they felt better, psychologically, when they could see the ocean and the sky. Then, too, easier landings could be made on the water in case of trouble. Storms and fronts could be seen at a distance and approaching aircraft were plainly discernible. But now, with in-

creased radio facilities and with all radio equipment functioning properly, the trip can be made just as well in daylight.

We had selected a 10 P.M. take-off time, and after inspecting tires, hydraulic lines, control surface hinges, internal control cables and the seals of the fuel tanks to see that they had not been broken, we were ready to fly. Six other ferry pilots were at the field, and shortly before the take-off, we argued about the best time for beginning the jump, night or day. Red Ezelle ended the controversy. "What the hell's the difference," he said, "night is just a little tougher because you can't see whether you're going to bleed, burn or drown."

Red's remark didn't ease our pain at that particular moment. The take-off strip was the most uncomfortable thing I've ever seen. It ended abruptly in a wasteland of sand, where there were no habitations or buildings of any sort from which a friendly light might have glowed to serve as a marker for a night take-off.

Chapter

9

ON THAT first southern trip of mine, we attempted something that has been done rarely—a nonstop flight from Natal to Accra, 2560 miles over ocean. We got away without excitement and the trip, which took sixteen hours and forty minutes, was routine. Boredom was our familiar companion. We stared down at the water, and after about eight hours, I leaned over and punched Steve.

“Stevie,” I mused, “I wonder how many trillions of gallons of water are down there.”

Steve put on a scholarly frown, as though he were going to measure every cupful, and answered: “Don’t know, Ed. Sort of damn dumb of me, too, isn’t it?”

We flew at 10,000 feet most of the way, doing little but opening cans of fruit juices, making hot chocolate, asking the navigator constantly for a fix, and becoming bored with each other. But we never relaxed our navigation watch, nor did we quit looking for enemy submarines. A peculiar incident happened as we neared the African continent. We had been trying in vain to contact the radio station at Accra, only a hundred or so miles ahead of us, for directions. Accra

wouldn't come in, but we had no difficulty in picking up clear, loud dance music from WLW, in Cincinnati, Ohio. I believe radio engineers call it skip-distance.

We had been flying with instruments for a couple of hours when the red dirt and green jungle of Accra bobbed up in front of us. We came in on one of the two asphalt runways carved out of this African wilderness and I climbed out of the plane to look at a real example of ingenuity. This airdrome had been hacked out of some of the most primitive country in the world. The American genius for getting a necessary job done, regardless of the difficulty, was never better exemplified. The airdrome was at the ocean's edge, with the surf beating almost at the ends of the runways. Near by were barracks where two men were assigned to each room. It was a double-bunk affair, with mosquito nets the most essential equipment.

We learned quite a few things quickly at Accra. First, we were told to carry flashlights with us at all times during the night to avoid an unpleasant meeting with a snake. We were told to observe the usual sanitation rules about food and water. Native boys were assigned to act as our servants. They washed and ironed, shined our shoes and attended to our needs. I heard the other pilots talking pidgin English to their boys, so I called my man, a big, strapping fellow, and pointing elaborately to my shirt, remarked: "Look—go wash shirt. Make good rub. Make hurry. Go wash quick one time."

A smile spread over his face as he took the shirt. You're right—it happened to me, just the way it does in the classic joke. My man said: "Oh, yes sir, I understand perfectly what you wish—a clean shirt. I have a pretty vast knowledge of English after attending Georgetown University."

I was floored and the kidding I took from the other pilots was unmerciful. It appeared, too, that I had committed another social error with the same boy, after the first day's service, when I tipped him a dime for exceptionally good work. One of the British squadron leaders lit into me without warning.

"My God, old fellow," he snorted, "you have ruined these boys. We usually give them a penny a week."

Accra was no bargain from any angle. Several thousand people had accumulated in the spot because of the place's importance on the ferry route, but it was still no more than a town of shops run by natives, plus a few British, and some anthills that towered as high as thirty feet. Then there was the usual bad food. In self-protection, we rummaged through our own food supply—Spam, peanut butter and fruit juices. A good steak would have been reason for murder.

The next leg of our journey was to Lagos, in Nigeria. Lagos is noted for one thing and that is the Royal Club. I've never forgotten how the name sounded as we landed in that forgotten spot in the African wastes. The attendants at the airport told us we were to stop at the Royal Club.

"Jeez," Steve said, "the Royal Club. Now ain't that something out here? Wonder what kind of a bar they have?"

"Don't know," I said, "but if it's as good as it sounds, I'm ready."

We drove into Lagos in a British car and stopped before a dingy stone building beside the muddy river.

"What are we stopping here for?" I asked the driver.

"This is where you stay," he told us.

We were crushed. This building would have been condemned if it stood anywhere else in the world. We wound up a creaking flight of stairs to the manager's office. There sat a big, jovial Englishman looking like a character in an African novel. He wore knee-length socks, shorts and a dirty sun helmet. It was Bill Little—manager, room clerk, president, bus boy and cashier of the Royal Club.

"Welcome, welcome," he beamed. "Welcome to Royal Club. Only the best for you Americans."

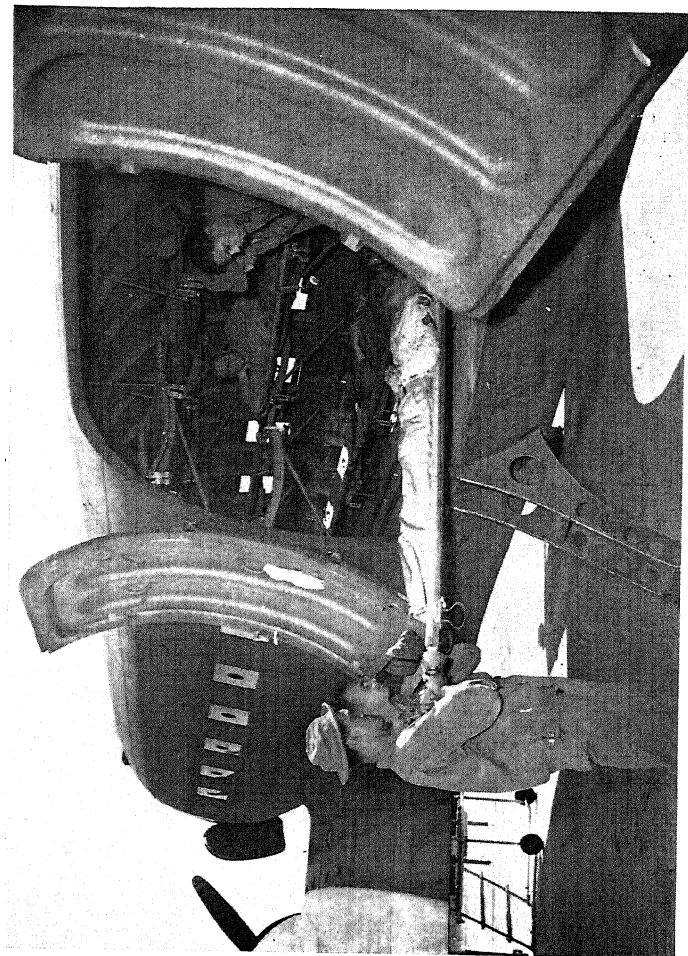
Steve and I stared around the room. We must have looked what we were thinking.

Bill Little chuckled. "Come, gentlemen," he said, "let's get to the bar."

The bar was a wooden counter on one side of a pool-room. An ancient piano—God knows how it found its way there—tottered in the middle of the room and an RAF sergeant gunner was banging away on its hoarse keys. It looked as though it might collapse if the sergeant touched the bass just once more.



Machinery is loaded on a Transport Command plane at Westover Field, Mass.



The 63rd Troop Carrier Group of the 53rd Troop Carrier Wing demonstrates method of placing litter for medical use in a C-47.

On the far side of the room, out of range of the bar stench, heavy and dirty drapes hung at one side of the pool tables. We feared the worst when we drew them aside—and we were right. There were eight cots stretched side by side. These were our rooms. The Royal Club!

“Dinner won’t be long,” Bill Little said.

We were afraid to face dinner, and once more we were correct. Some kind of soup that could be native only to that spot was placed on the table. It looked and smelled like blood soup. I couldn’t touch it. Next came a fish course and with it thousands of flies. They seemed to trail the fish from the kitchen to the bar-poolroom-dancehall-bedroom. I tried a couple of bites, desperately, but I had to run for the nearest window.

Steve tugged my sleeve and we went to “our room” behind the curtain.

“So this is one of the dangers of flying the ocean,” Steve whispered. “And you get it right on dry land!”

We reached under the bed, pulled out the cardboard carton, opened another can of Spam and Dole pineapple juice, gazed admiringly at the label, and had a good American meal in Nigeria.

Next day was Sunday and Sunday there was almost sacrilege. We were waiting for the Pan-American Clipper to take us back to Miami and it was late. We had nothing else to do, so we toured the town. The streets were indescribably filthy. The natives lived virtually on the sidewalks. The

men were large, with white sheets draped about them, swords dangling at their sides and black beards covering their faces, exactly as I had seen them in the movies. Tiny naked children streaked through the streets shrieking the Nigerian equivalent of "Give me." We shooed them away.

Spotting some bicycles, we contracted for them at the rate of two shillings per day so that we could pedal around the metropolis in style. Steve Wedge, Earl Bennett and I were wheeling through the filth of the streets when Steve drew to a halt in front of a tall, thin native wrapped in the usual dirty white sheet. A dirtier white turban was coiled around his shaven head. He was selling ivory. Stroking his goatee and smiling, he told us of the precious quality of the cigarette holders and beads in his basket. Steve, wise to the natives, looked credulous and asked: "Real ivory? Not just make-believe stuff?"

The native put on his usual injured-dignity routine.

"Mastah, you hurt me bery bad. You surprise me. Don't think I would try cheat white mastah. You be bery big man, me just native. Here, I give you one if you think it is no ivory. This be best ivory, sell only for white mastah."

"We'll damn well see," Steve grinned as he raked a match across the seat of his pants. "If this thing is fake, it'll burn to hell."

He touched the match to the holder and it burst into a tiny flare. He dropped it and sucked a burned thumb. The native stamped out the fire, turned on Steve with indignant

rage and screamed: "Bery bad white mastah. You try cheat me. Never before ivory burn."

Steve took a good tongue-lashing before he unwound his six feet, three inches, got off his bike leisurely and exclaimed: "Get the hell outa here, or I'll throw you in the river."

The native and his boy helper fled, yelling curses over their shoulders. Steve pedaled furiously after them. He came back with a handful of cigarette holders, grinning. "I'll sell 'em to some dumb radio operator," he remarked.

We went back to the Royal Club and decided to kill a little time in a game of pool. The table top apparently had been used as a soccer field by rats. While we were wrestling with it, we heard a commotion in the street below and stepped to the balcony to investigate. Below us were scores of naked kids, sending up the "give me" cry again.

"Might as well see how a riot happens here," Steve said as he jerked a handful of pennies from his pockets. He tossed a few at a time into the mob and why there weren't more broken bones I will never know. I have never seen such a scrimmage on an American football field. Older natives who attempted to thread their way through the street with huge trays of fruit on their heads were swamped by the kids scrambling for pennies. Fruit, natives and naked kids were flying everywhere. Bill Little finally came to the balcony with a frantic appeal to cease or the local force would be around to toss us in the jail-house. We won-

dered if the jail was worse than the Royal Club, and quit our game of penny ante murder.

At nightfall we ventured out again. We hailed a taxicab, which was a definite mistake, and told the driver to show us the place. He hurtled the cab down the streets in the total blackout, never using the horn. Probably the machine didn't have one anyway. As we sat on the edge of the rear seat, all we could see was a mass of white sheets scattering in all directions to get out of the way as we careened down the left side of the inky street. A New York taxi driver never took life so lightly.

Next morning we got the best news possible. The Pan-American ship had arrived and we were ready for the return flight back to Miami. We made the field near Dakar to refuel, load and hit the sky trail for Natal.

On that first visit to this field, I bought a cute little monkey from a native for \$1.40. The Clipper crew laid down definite orders about animals. None was to be aboard when we started for Natal. But the temptation was great, because that monkey was no ordinary animal. I crammed her into my brief case, after lining it with newspapers, and took her aboard. She had extremely bad manners and nicked me several times when I put her into her new home. We settled down on the Clipper and I slipped an occasional banana down to her to keep her quiet. All went well until nightfall. It began to get colder then and

the monkey chattered and yelled all night. I don't know why she didn't suffocate when I stifled those cries. I was afraid the crew would throw us both overboard if they found us. By the most adroit maneuvering, I got her all the way back to Miami without detection. But I was a nervous wreck.

We hopped from Natal to Trinidad nonstop, and from Trinidad on into Miami. One strange thing occurred on the trip. As we approached each landing field, the steward came back and carefully snapped the curtains shut to comply with a regulation stating that no passengers were to see the physical layout of a landing field. We protested violently, arguing vainly that we ferry pilots were the guys who flew our own planes over the same routes. But the steward was intent only on carrying out orders, as after all a good steward should be. However, we decided to put an end to the business of curtain snapping. We hatched a plot. The curtains were not attached to the windows but were simply pieces of felt with snap fasteners to fit each window. All these curtains were kept piled neatly in the luggage compartment at the rear of the cabin.

As we neared Natal, a couple of us went back quietly, gathered up the pile and stuffed it behind a bulkhead far back in the tail. It wasn't long before the steward came storming through the various compartments of the Clipper, fuming and threatening because some blankety-blank fool

ferry pilot had hidden his blackout shades. We sat and grinned happily as the plane circled to a smooth landing in the harbor, with our view unobstructed.

There is a peculiar ritual which must be suffered when a plane coming from Africa lands at a South American port. As soon as the plane docks, two Brazilian officials enter with spray guns and proceed to fill the cabin with an acrid smothering fog aimed at killing any stowaway mosquitoes or other pests which might be hitchhiking behind a seat cushion or under a seat. No one is allowed to disembark while this fumigation process takes place and all doors and windows are kept shut. The result is a cabin full of choking, gasping people with handkerchiefs held to noses and tears streaming down their faces. In tropic heat, it's an ordeal. At last the door is opened and everyone rushes out on the dock for a gulp of fresh air.

We had an Army major aboard that trip, and as I looked back at the plane, I saw him with his head stuck out a port-hole, gasping for air and yelling something at the top of his voice. I followed the steward back to find out what the commotion was about.

It seems that the major was without his pants and couldn't find them. I thought he would have apoplexy before the steward, searching desperately in every nook and cranny, found the pile of curtains we had hidden, and in them the major's pants, which we must have picked up by mistake.

If that major ever reads this book, I hope he never finds the author.

I landed safely with the monkey, which Dean Smith, director of transport aviation for Curtiss-Wright, later named Josephine. It was through Josephine that I met Lowell Thomas, the radio news commentator. I was coming down in an elevator at the Statler Hotel in Washington, D. C., with Josephine snuggled in my uniform coat pocket. Burdette Wright, president of Curtiss-Wright, was in the elevator, and was startled to find a furry paw in his hand. He looked down to see Josephine's tail dangling from my pocket, where I always carried her. I introduced her to Mr. Wright and he, in turn, introduced me to Lowell Thomas, Mrs. Jimmy Doolittle and other members of his party. I was invited to lunch with them. It was the beginning of a pleasant friendship with Thomas.

Poor Josephine died in Washington. She spent many happy afternoons with me in the cocktail lounge of the Mayflower Hotel, where one little squeal was a sign for every woman in the room to come over to "see the little dear." I enjoyed it, too.

No doubt about it, Josephine was a decided social asset.

Chapter

10

MY "APPRENTICESHIP" with Pan-American ended after the first flight. I had qualified as a captain and was ready to begin ferrying bombers across.

There was a painful interlude, though, while I fought a bad case of amebic dysentery in the hospital, contracted on the trip to Africa. Dysentery is worse than flying an ocean. Ferry pilots dread it, and none of them feels he can be too cautious about food and sanitation when he is on a trip.

I spent my convalescent days in Miami, instructing and checking out new pilots in a twin-engine Lockheed. Then one day news came that some Mitchell B-25 bombers had to be ferried to the Russians in Iran. I got orders to leave Miami and proceed to Cairo, there to await further orders. With Co-Pilot Virgil Adair and Navigator George Shelton as my crew, we made a midnight take-off, successfully touched base at Trinidad and Belem, and were smoking along without a sign of trouble when we reached Natal.

We had another midnight take-off scheduled from Natal, and had approximately a ton overload in gasoline on the

plane because we were attempting a nonstop flight to Monrovia. There were special fuel tanks slung in the bomb bays, and an additional five specially built tanks stuck in the nose of the bombardier's compartment. It would be a long flight and we were eliminating the greatest fear of a transoceanic pilot—lack of fuel.

There was no moon that night and it was absolutely black. We were making an instrument take-off on a not-too-long runway. I reached up, switched off the dome light, got lined up on the runway, checked my clearance and gave it the gun.

The B-25 has a tricycle landing gear. We were whistling down the runway at about eighty miles per hour when, without warning, the nose wheel collapsed. The ship plunged dizzily on its nose and the two props churned into the ground. Sixteen tons of airplane was grinding along on two props and a nose—with five full gasoline tanks in that nose. A stream of fire three feet thick spread out in back of us in a Fourth of July sparkle.

God had His arm around us. There can be no other reason why we didn't burn to death in that Mitchell on the Natal runway. I reached over while we were still sliding, slammed the throttle shut, and cut the master ignition switch.

"Bust the windows!" I yelled to Adair and Shelton.

Not one of us can remember how he got out. It must have been instinctive. I don't remember much about the

whole thing, except that I thought of a lot of things in a few seconds: Miami, death, and why in the hell I ever got into such a business.

I slammed at the left window and dove out through it. Never did three men leave an airplane as rapidly as we did that night. We hit the ground rolling and ran like mad away from the plane. Adair and Shelton went out through the emergency hatch in the roof. A Navy crash truck screamed across the runway. Men ran from everywhere. Incredibly, that gas-loaded plane, streaming flame from its belly, did not burn or explode. No one knows why. It never left the runway.

A few minutes later, I heard Adair grumbling: "Damn you, Shelton, I ought to break in your head for that."

He was rubbing the seat of his pants. Shelton had boosted him out of the hatch with a terrific kick in the fanny. It hurt him for days, and during all of that period they argued about it endlessly.

At dawn the next day we climbed aboard a C-53 passing through and went back to Miami. The day after we landed in Miami we were given another Mitchell B-25 and started on our way again. This time I had Jerry Creswell, a Texan from Abilene, as my co-pilot and John Banic, a fellow who could laugh about almost anything, as my navigator. Once again we made the run to Trinidad and Belem with ease, but I came into Natal with that skidding airplane still in my mind's eye.

We fueled up in the same manner and readied for the take-off to Marshall Field. As we raced down the runway on the take-off, I could see a picture only a few days old. But we made the take-off and headed out over the Atlantic.

The flight from Natal is often rough. A plane must approach Africa through an inter-tropical front which lurks off the coast. The field at the African destination is dangerous, closed in half the time. We flew for hours without mishap, but two hours from our estimated time of arrival we tried in vain to establish radio contact. There was nothing but wild static. The front we had expected was there all right. An hour out we bolted into fog and rain, a sheet of heavy nothingness that blotted out everything, including the nose of the plane. We could see nothing. Still no radio contact. The gasoline supply was dwindling.

I let the plane down to fifty feet above the water; our eyes were tired from straining. At last Banic called: "Land below there—sand. Looks like the beach, all right."

I knew the field was only a mile inland and I knew tall trees and hills were just in back of the field. In that blindness we could be heading for a certain crash, so I spun the plane around and we headed for the open sea again.

Fifteen minutes later we finally got the field by radio. We asked them to turn on their direction finder beacon and soon we were able to get a loop bearing on them. It was a wonderful feeling, up there in the murk, to be able to put your hand on something, figuratively speaking, after

groping around in fear of slamming into a mountainside, or clipping the top of a tree.

We started back in again slowly, following the direction finder as we flew in over the sandy beach. Creswell strained out the right window, ready to shout a warning at the first sight of a hill, or of the airport. I was busy flying instruments and trying to watch out the side window at the same time. We knew the highest thing we had to clear between ocean and airdrome was a fringe of trees sixty feet high, but we were literally groping our way in, skimming treetops, unable to see anything ahead. Suddenly we skimmed across the field, scarcely able to identify its eerie outline below. I turned the plane around quickly and headed toward the sea in preparation for the run in. Setting my directional gyro on zero, I made a 180-degree turn to the shore line, came back and put down the landing gear.

I yelled to Jerry to get his hand on the flap lever. The instant he saw sand he called: "Flaps down—take her in!"

I cut both throttles, jammed the nose down and we came in. We were on the ground almost before we knew we were actually on the airport. It was a moment for prayer when we finally stopped rolling and realized we'd made it. Six more ships were behind us. The field was emptied of every human being and they all stood around the control tower, as though they were at a wake. I knew what they were thinking.

Don Farrow, a grand flyer who once piloted for Ameri-

can Airlines and is now listed as missing, buzzed the field next. I crossed my fingers and strained through the mush above. Once more he circled the field and glided in at last.

Next it was Earl Bennett. My knuckles were tight and sore as I watched him go through the same procedure—circling the field once at sixty feet, getting a quick look and then skimming in over the trees. Three more made it in and the nerves of everyone in that tower were just about shot.

The last one was Bill Cummings.

We could hear his radio call. He was lost in the fog, said he had passed over the field twice but couldn't find it. The tower man interrupted, as the roar of Bill's motor sounded a hundred feet over our heads: "Cummings—you just passed us!" Bill made three more passes at the field. We were scared stiff for him. Sometimes I can still see that scene—the tense group of pilots and attendants out there on an isolated field on the African coast, trying to wish a flyer in through the curtain of fog.

On the last try, we could hear Bill make a steep turn and head for the ocean once more. Then we didn't hear him. One hour, two hours, three hours passed. We knew he didn't have much gas. We checked him off as either crashed in the fog, or if he were lucky, down on the stretch of sandy beach.

Next morning, at dawn, the twin-engine Grumman am-

phibian they had on the field for local survey work and taxis went out to search the beaches. If he had landed, we all figured he would try it on the beach. Three hours later they found Bill's plane, half in the surf and half on the beach, torn to bits. But Cummings and his crew hadn't been scratched!

The fog kept us at the field for another full day, and it was a bad place to be stranded. We tossed cans and beer bottles in the muddy little river that wound around back of the airdrome and got in some target practice with our pistols. Then at last we got away on the leg to Accra. It was routine flying all the way down the coast, but I felt that I could stand a little routine after my experience.

We were five days behind schedule in our flight to Tehran when we hit Accra, on account of the first crack-up at Natal and the weather holdup. We scrambled into bed for a few hours of sleep before we were scheduled to take off again at 2 A.M.

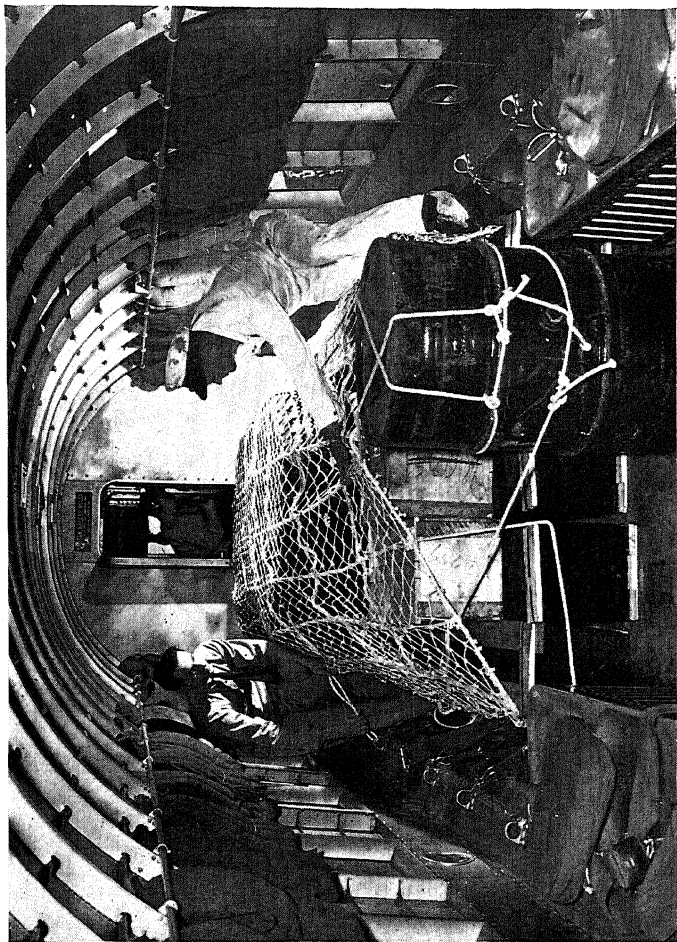
It was blacker than the natives when we crawled into the ship in the still night and took off. I decided to risk the short-cut straight across leaving out the customary and safer leg to Kano. We got up to 5,000 as quickly as possible. There was a special reason. Only a month before, Frank Cordova of New York miscalculated on the same short cut and crashed into the side of a mountain in that vast sector which is as wild as any place on the globe. The maps we had for flying over Africa in the early days weren't the best.

Sometimes they didn't list all the ranges and sometimes the estimates on heights were not entirely accurate.

Rough fronts smashed us and we climbed at 190 miles per hour over the overcast. At daybreak we began scanning the countryside for landmarks. It was discouraging at first, nothing but tangled jungle below. Landmarks in that stuff? We couldn't believe there were. At 5:01 A.M. we crossed the Niger River and I knew we were over most of the tough obstacles. It was 6:35 A.M. when we homed in on the direction finder. Although it may be difficult to believe, it was very easy to fly over those desert airports and never see them. They were just blank, meaningless spaces out there in the shale. The airdrome was like that; we pulled down and swished along on the sand. There were no runways. We sat there in the desert bleakness and had tea and cookies with a British operations officer while the plane was refueled.

Getting off those sand runways is something else again. It requires a special technique. First you blast your engines wide open with the brakes on, holding the wheel tightly in your belly to take the weight off the nose wheel and keep it from burrowing into the sand. Our main wheel tires had been deflated. We had a full load and I was relieved when we finally roared up into the hot, still air and headed for Khartoum, Egypt.

Once again there was the barrenness of the desert, and the sensation of insignificance every man feels when he sees



Interior view of old DC-3 (Army designation C-53) withdrawn from civil airlines and converted for cargo carrying.



Curious natives in New Guinea come to stare at Air Transport plane carrying men from Army bases in Australia.

himself projected against that emptiness. We crossed the desert at 9,000 feet. It must have been 120 degrees Fahrenheit inside the cockpit. The hours went by like weeks. We sat there, stripped to the waist, and perspiration ran down our chests in rivulets. Breathing was harder and the heat seared. No landmarks. Nothing but our own navigation, mostly by drift-meter. We used it every ten minutes to steer a straight course. All of us had an unspoken fear of getting lost, going in circles until the gas ran out.

There was six hours and twenty-five minutes of it. Once in awhile we could see a few barren huts down below. We wondered at the sight of them, and Banic shouted over to me: "Now how in the hell do they live down there? Where do they get water?"

"More important," I answered, "how do they live with each other forever out in these places? Wonder if they have electric lights?"

Creswell threw a cushion at me.

The desert I had pictured wasn't there. The great white dunes I had seen in the movies, the ones I had read about since I was a kid, never appeared. I was disappointed. There was nothing but mile after mile of rocky shale. Once we went over a great hump 13,000 feet high that was nothing but shale. I was disillusioned.

I'll never forget how it felt when we stepped out of the plane at Khartoum. It was like stepping in front of a blast furnace. The heat was far worse than it had been in the

plane. It was so hot that we didn't even perspire, just baked.

The barracks were near by, and one of the most welcome sights I had seen in weeks greeted us—the grinning faces of big Len Cramer, Al Davis and Virgil Adair. We were certainly glad to see them, but they were only passing through on a return trip.

“Brother,” I shouted to Al, “am I glad to see that pan of yours after looking at those rocks!”

They were off again in a short time.

“Be sure and call my wife when you get in,” Banic shouted to them as they began warming up the ship.

That was our “telegraph” service. Whenever we passed anyone on the route, we loaded them with a raft of messages to take home. Those girls got notes from places which had never seen a telegraph pole or a telephone wire.

Chapter

11

KHARTOUM was a luxury stop, what with the modern brick barracks the British had built, but I didn't expect one convenience that smacked us between the eyes when we walked into the mess hall. I tell you no lie when I report that right out there on the desert was an air-conditioning unit. We fondled and caressed it. Inside the mess hall it was a sweet 80 degrees. The metal tag on that Carrier air-conditioning unit, which identified it as being made in Syracuse, New York, made us all feel pretty empty and nostalgic.

The bathroom fixtures were another matter. Little stalls at one end of the barracks served as toilets. Only a few feet away from that Syracuse wonder were toilets consisting of five-gallon cans, buckets of sand, and play shovels for you to do your own sanitation engineering. Such is the desert.

Outside the barracks we found the Egyptians, who were much as we had pictured them—leathery brown, wearing fezzes, turbans, and the familiar white “nightgowns.” Most of the Egyptians in the mess hall walked barefooted, but some had sandals. At intervals during the day, the Egyptians removed their sandals and knelt in the sand to wor-

ship. If the day was overcast, the pilots always knew where to find the East by watching the Egyptians at their devotions.

We weren't allowed to sleep in the air-conditioned mess hall, so we took our beds out into the courtyard. It was a strange feeling to wake up in the middle of the night, touch your bed, and find it extremely hot.

Next morning we got away early and flew up the Nile, headed for Cairo. The farther we went, the more wary the British became in their security precautions. It was plain suicide not to observe their regulations. The British mean business; they will shoot you down if you don't follow all security measures strictly. Midway between Khartoum and Cairo was a village so small I could scarcely find it, called Wadi-Haifa. We had been instructed to dive low over it and fire the colors of the day with our Very pistols. Failure to clear our signals meant trouble. Those signals varied from day to day, and we got different ones every place we went. More than once a Hurricane or Spitfire fighter came roaring alongside to have a look at us, then disappeared. We were getting close to the actual battle fronts.

Cairo drew near and we were like a bunch of kids at the prospect of seeing the pyramids and being in a city we had heard and read about since childhood. We could see the pyramids across the Nile and it was a thrill. I couldn't resist circling them.

We landed at Heliopolis airdrome and were driven in to

Shepherd's Hotel. It was much like any large hotel in the States except for the sheeted and turbaned dragomen who handled our luggage. The rooms were ridiculously lavish, with their 25-foot ceilings and massive beds big enough to hold six or seven people. The bathrooms were larger than an average hotel room in America.

I walked out on the balcony and looked down into the open-air theater in the courtyard on an audience viewing a movie. The whole thing was so much like a story out of a book, that I walked back inside and sat on the bed rather timidly. It was dinner time and Banic said I loused up the whole beautiful scene by reaching in my bag and opening a can of American beans—and eating them on the bed! Somehow those American canned beans tasted better than ever in the majestic setting of a Shepherd's Hotel bedroom.

Next day the whole gang of us set out on a sightseeing trip that would have taken all blue ribbons for real "sucker" excursions. We were ripe—and we were plucked. We got our baptism inside the pyramids. The guide who was showing us through the black interior of the tombs struck a few matches in a manner designed to show us that these were not the things good tourists use in seeing the pyramids. Then he advised us, in an offhand way, that he had some manganese sticks which would give us genuine illumination and a good look at the interior.

"Only twenty-five cents apiece," he told us.

We bought the sticks and did well with them for about thirty seconds. Then the guide deftly snuffed them out with his finger and advised us that a relighting would cost an additional two-bits. We cast away a few dollars in that pastime before we emerged into the sunlight.

I thought I was doing the job up brown when I tossed the guide a couple of American dollars for his tip, and so did Creswell. But not the guide. He let out a scream: "Cheap! Cheap! Only two dollars they give me, only two dollars. And Americans—anybody else but an American. You Americans are always so generous."

Other tourists near by stopped to listen. It was embarrassing. The crowd grew. I gave the man two more dollars and melted away. We walked down the streets of Cairo and saw the most violent contrasts. Here was a filthy beggar with maggots crawling between his toes, but if you walked past him into a bazaar shop you could buy Shalimar and Chanel No. 5 perfumes in a setting of Oriental opulence. If the proprietor liked you and made a sale, he expected you to sit down and share a cup of tea with him. We protested, but he insisted. To refuse was an insult. Tiny cups were placed in our hands and in them was a delicious brew. After many thank-yous on our part, and bowing and scraping from the host, we got away to the hotel, where I began to think of all the diseases I might have acquired from drinking out of those cups. I looked for an antiseptic, but the only thing I could find was a cake of Lifebuoy soap.

I bit off a generous hunk and started chewing. I gargled with it and scrubbed my teeth with it. The experience was unforgettable. My mouth was terribly sore for a week.

Our next stop was Teheran. We left Cairo early in the morning and flew out along the edge of the Mediterranean. Security regulations were increasing and multiplying. At almost every village it was imperative that we circle and fire the colors of the day from the Very gun. Most notable of the regulations, however, was hitting the Suez Canal at exactly one spot—a huge monument. We had to fly through the corridor for ten minutes, firing the colors of the day as we entered. It was easy to understand all these precautions when you learned that the Germans had once used captured and reclaimed British planes to sow land mines in the Suez.

Soon we landed at a field on the Euphrates River. It was steaming hot. The grapes were actually parched. We drank pitcher after pitcher of water. It was worse heat than we had encountered on the desert. Our final briefing into Teheran was given us there, and we were on the last leg of a flight halfway around the world to deliver one airplane to our Russian allies. Our next landmark was Bagdad, sixty-five miles away, and we made it without incident.

Flyers who love flying always have that desire to “buzz” places and we got our biggest kick out of the whole trip when they actually instructed us to “buzz” Bagdad. We came zooming in at about two hundred miles per hour,

and almost had to tip a wing to keep from hitting a mosque. We stirred every sleeper in the place and had everyone scurrying.

Why did we buzz Bagdad?

We figured it out this way—that the British had us roar in over the roof tops to impress the natives, as a show of might. Perhaps we were wrong, but the idea seems logical.

We climbed up again and our next check point was at the edge of a range of mountains. It was necessary to climb like hell to make 13,000 feet by the time we arrived there. One spot was extremely dangerous, a place where we had to head into a sheer cliff of 10,000 feet. There was a spill of air on one side of the cliff, and if you flew too close, it would drag you into the ground. We gave it a wide berth.

Our briefing had instructed us to follow a long and winding road through the mountain ranges, and we did as we were told, without asking questions. Later, we learned the reason. Wild tribesmen inhabited the ranges, and if an airplane were forced down in that region, the crew had little chance to survive, even if a smooth landing could be made. Once before a plane had landed in that wilderness and radioed for help, but no word was ever heard from it again. It was considered too risky to send troops in after survivors.

Repeatedly we had been informed that if storm clouds gathered after we cleared the range, we were to turn around

and come back. It was impossible to get into Teheran in bad weather. Directly behind the city is an 18,000-foot mountain range. At that time there were no radio beams, only a direction finder. It was possible only to get a loop bearing. Coming over the mountains was fairly turbulent for us and we lost both compasses. It was getting dark and I was beginning to be worried. We tried again and again to get the Teheran direction finder, without luck. But on exactly the same frequency, we got another station, strong as garlic. We followed it and it was pretty much on the same course as Teheran, we figured.

"We've passed our ETA," Creswell said.

I nodded.

"We should be spotting that 18,000-foot range pretty soon," I said. "Don't see a trace of it. What's that over there?"

It was a railroad track, one that we were supposed to find, but we didn't know whether to turn left or right. All we knew was that Teheran lay along that track. We decided to turn left—and we guessed wrong. About ten miles down the track we spotted a great level field with an airplane on it. The plane looked to be vintage of 1925. A group of men stood near it. We buzzed the field once and saw the men, helmets and goggles on, waving. We came around once more and landed. The men were Russians, hard, cold-looking fellows in big, ungainly boots, shapeless pants and loose-fitting tunics.

Our navigator, Johnny Banic, was of Yugoslavian descent and spoke enough of the Balkan languages to get over the idea that we were lost. The Russians got out a map with a million crosses. It looked at least twenty years old. Marks had been made on it in Russian. Even looking at the map, we were still lost. I got out my camera, meanwhile, and asked them to pose for a picture, but they didn't like the idea at all and I didn't get the shot. At last they understood that we wanted to get to Teheran. Big grins cracked their faces. They knew then that we were taking a plane to the Russians.

One of them made us understand by motions that he would climb into their biplane and we could follow him into Teheran. I looked dubiously at the big, slow machine he was flying and knew that I wouldn't be able to fly slowly enough to stay behind him. I delayed my take-off until he was only a speck in the distance. We overtook him quickly, and by dropping the landing gear and putting down half-flap, we wallowed along as slowly as the B-25 would fly. Even at that, I was passing him gradually so I blew him a farewell kiss, lifted the gear and flaps and gunned it. I had no desire to get caught in strange country by darkness.

Following the tracks on into Teheran, we landed there at nightfall and found something we didn't expect—large, concrete runways. We turned over all our papers to the Air Force representative of the Iranian Mission. Fifteen min-

utes later the Russian biplane came lumbering in. He landed and I ran over, shook hands and gave him my best smile to let him know I appreciated his help.

Teheran, the capital of Iran, is a truly fine city. I never stopped marveling at its splendor on the four trips I made there. Its location on the side of a mountain gives it an unusual natural beauty. It is a place to go wild on a shopping tour. There is, for example, mother-of-pearl right out of the Caspian Sea. An American woman would be crazy about the handmade, hammered silver in the shops. We loaded up with the silver. I bought a cigarette case for \$9, American money, and was offered \$25 for it when I reached Cairo on the return trip.

That return trip is a nightmare we always dreaded. We usually made it by Pan-American's African Airways, sitting on aluminum bucket seats in those big C-53's. No seats, no cushions, nothing but weariness. I would rather make three trips across the desert, ferrying a bomber, than to go on one return in a C-53. It isn't my idea of solid comfort. Desert flying isn't good, any way you take it, but it's worse when you're a passenger.

We dropped down at Basra, Iraq, on the way back and put up in the airport hotel. I hired a cab driver who was one of the most comical characters I've ever seen in my life. He had a round face, a little fez, and he wore an ill-fitting American business suit. He never stopped talking, in his excellent English. He took us out to the bazaar to

see the Moslem women, but I raised hell there by taking some pictures of them. They fled.

Then the monotonous trip back over the same route by C-53—down to Accra, across the water to Natal, Belem, Trinidad and home again.

I wouldn't try to tell you how good that Miami skyline looked.

Chapter

12

MY PURPOSE in this narration of the ferry pilots' life, and my observations on how the routes were flown in the early days, has been not to dramatize but simply to provide a general picture of the task involved in shuttling airplanes across oceans.

It wasn't all roses.

Many days we waited in Miami for our own runs and heard report after report come back about how others, our friends, had failed to master the ocean. Most of the flights were routine, of course, except for the expected rough spots, but danger was always present.

There was the day we heard about Captain Ralph Neese and Co-Pilot Larry DeRosia, the latter from Malone, New York. (DeRosia had been a sergeant-pilot with me in those early RCAF training days back in 1940.) One of the night take-offs from Natal got them. They had loaded their Mitchell B-25 to the gills with gasoline to make that long nonstop flight straight across to the field near Dakar. They got off the runway and climbed to a couple of hundred feet when death caught up with them. Witnesses who always

watched the planes out of sight on the Natal take-off reported that their wing lights were seen to turn first one way and then another.

Suddenly the blinking lights streamed downward like a falling meteor. The plane burrowed into the sand hills just below the field with a blinding crash. Neece, DeRosia and the navigator, a lad whose name escapes me, were all killed instantly. No one could say what happened. It could have been sabotage, or it might have been engine failure, or that terrific gasoline load which was the big gamble on a take-off.

We were depressed by the news when we heard it in Miami. Larry, a swell kid, had been married only a couple of months. Margaret, his bride, knew the risks of flying; she had been an American Airlines hostess. I went over with the Don Farrows to Margaret's house to console her. Not many weeks later, Don Farrow himself disappeared. The South Atlantic swallowed him. No radio signals, no last call. Gone.

Then there was Flake Clausewitz, the daring cotton head from San Antonio, who could fly anything with wings. No one could imagine Flake dead in a plane crash, but it happened. He took off from Miami one day to ferry a Lockheed Ventura (B-34) bomber. The run to Trinidad, Belem and Natal was uneventful, and so was his perfect shoot into Ascension Island on the hop to Accra. Shortly after dawn he left Ascension for Accra and was halfway

there when he radioed back urgently that he had lost one engine but he would limp in on the remaining motor. Even with that handicap, no one who knew Flake Clausewitz was too worried, because he radioed that he would make either Accra or Takoradi and his friends swore that he would do it if the ship held together.

But that particular ship used a lot of oil. It even carried auxiliary tanks in the cockpit to pump oil into the main tanks in the engine nacelles by means of a bicycle pump.

Once more it was a guessing game as we tried to piece together the reports that came back to Miami, but we decided that Flake ran out of oil on the remaining engine because of the extra load.

They found his ship upside down in a field on the African coast. He had forced the big plane on across the water, all right, but apparently had either turned over in landing on the rough field, or had stalled and spun in trying to stretch his glide to reach the field. All aboard were dead.

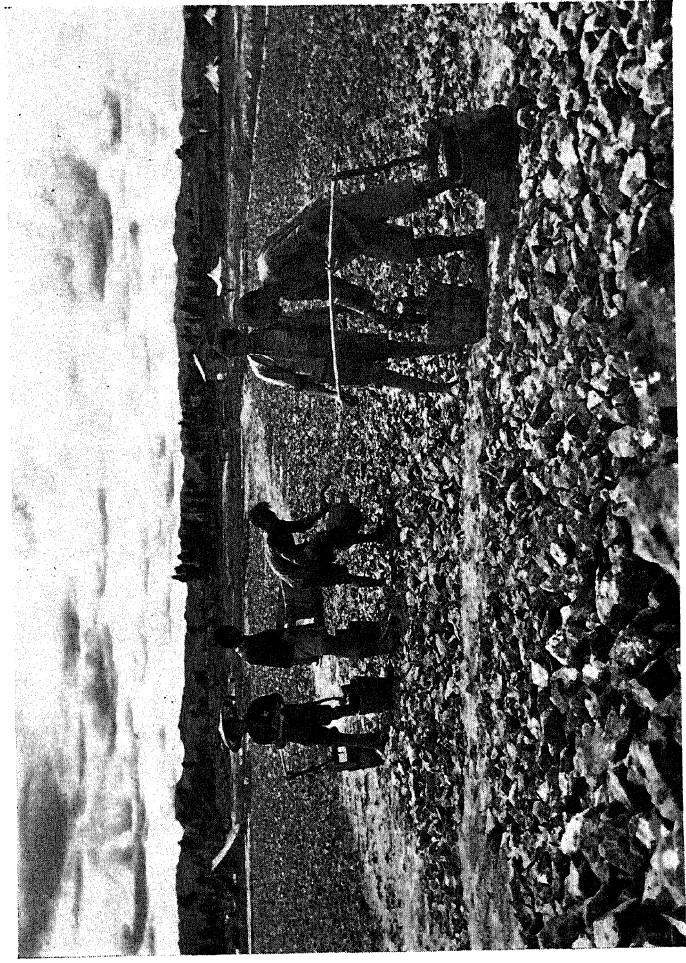
But it was a great scene when the pilots returned to home base in Miami, as they usually did. The big C-53 would tumble onto the field and unload a gang of pilots who resembled a circus troupe. Everybody was in a natural hurry to get out, but no one could move until Navy doctors came aboard and took our temperatures. Then the pilots burst out. The sight was truly amazing. They carried snake-skins, monkeys, camel-skin hassocks, swords, knives, guns, riding crops, fly switches from Cairo, Oriental rugs. Some

wore shorts, some wore boots, and some had pith helmets. Inside the office, a blood smear was always taken from our fingers to detect malaria. Then Miami belonged to the ferry pilots for a few hours, at least. Most of them had earned a chunk of the place, at that.

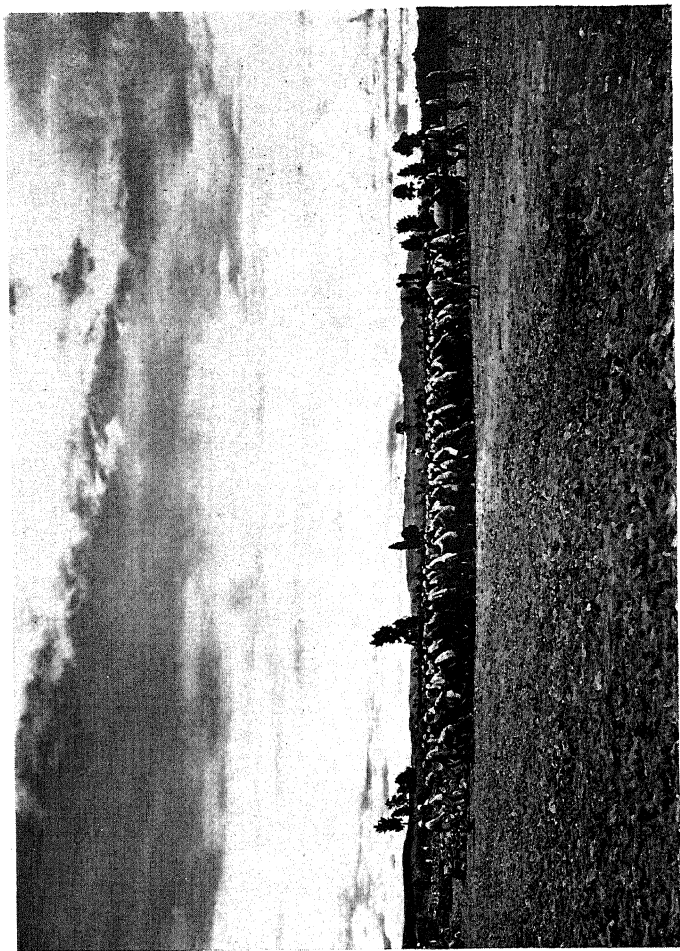
There was one time when I was sure I would never see Miami again. I was thousands of miles away and about as far from the bright lights as a man could fly. We were in a B-25, far north over Arabia, enroute to India on a long ferrying mission, when engine trouble developed and we began to lose oil pressure. The barren landscape stretched below us and we weren't too certain where we were. Shale flowed beneath us like a bad dream.

I was worried because I had been unable to find an identifying pipe line that was to serve as the only landmark we could hope to encounter in that vast space. We discussed the probable hiding places of that pipe line for several minutes and I decided to swing around and circle a bit in search of it. Down below we spotted a place that looked as though it had been used as an emergency landing field on occasion, although I must admit that it took some straining of the imagination to picture an airplane landing out there.

Rough, rocky shale was all we could see. Cautiously I circled the spot in search of signs of life. We saw nothing for miles that resembled anything breathing. Then I flew down low, a few feet off the ground, to make certain we



Making An Airport, I. Where no fields exist for Air Transport ships, airports are carved out of the terrain. Here native laborers pour binding mixture of sand and water.



Making An Airport, II. Mass manpower rolls the rough rock surface on the runways until it is smoothed out and ready for steel matting.

could land without hitting an obstruction. Our tires were paper-thin and I didn't want to blow them out when we hit the ground. The shale looked like flint that would knife through rubber.

"Lord, I hate to do this to these tires," I muttered, "but let's go in and see what happens."

I rolled almost a mile, afraid to apply the brakes for fear I would grind a tire to bits. Finally we stopped. It was hot as the devil's furnace. We turned around and taxied back up the slope.

Within five minutes we were surrounded by Arabs. We were bewildered. We didn't know where they had come from, because we could have sworn from the air that there wasn't a visible thing within miles. As far as we could see, the ground was barren. It was eerie. Frightening, too, because we had heard about enemy Arabs and what they did to white men who fell into their hands.

Then I noticed that the Arabs were wearing a cord around their desert turbans with a metal disc in the center. No one had said a word. I strained to see what the disc meant and I was about the happiest man in that desert when I saw they were members of the British Arab Legion.

They were little men with long, black hair down to their shoulders, piercing black eyes and thin, hawk-like features. They were quite handsome. Most of them carried jeweled daggers across their middles, and side arms and cartridge belts. Long swords were in sheaths at their sides.

Not one of them spoke English, but we jabbered away and gestured wildly to let them know our plight, our nationality and our friendship. I hauled out my camera, and after some persuasion, argued them into letting me snap their pictures around the plane. They liked it.

We fixed the ship in about two hours while they hung around to watch. Then we gave them warm good-byes and roared away while they stood there waving. It was extreme good luck on our part that we had met friendly Arabs out there in the middle of the desert.

Rollie Inman, of Coffeyville, Kansas, is another ferry pilot who fell into a bad spot while over Africa and encountered friends. It is one of the great escape stories of the ferry service.

Rollie was taking a Martin Marauder, a B-26, across the bleakness of Africa. His Marauder was a fine ship, all right, but its high landing speed made it necessary to land on good runways. Somewhere between Accra and Kano, on the way to Cairo, Rollie lost an engine at 11,000 feet. In a few seconds he began to lose altitude with his heavy load of gasoline. The other engine began to sputter and hiss and below was nothing but jungle thickness, daring any man to land an airplane safely.

At first Rollie and his crew thought of bailing out and leaving the Marauder to make its own way. But the chutes were not where they could get to them, and by that time the plane was losing altitude so rapidly that something

drastic had to be done. Rollie decided to stick with it and attempt a forced landing somewhere. Quickly he dropped his bomb bay gas tank by pulling the lever, just as you would jettison bombs. He yelled to the crew to throw out everything in the ship. Still it nosed downward.

To make a forced landing in a Marauder over the best of modern runways takes plenty of luck and the best piloting. To make one in a jungle is virtually impossible. Rollie headed for the only possible spot to land—a river. It was still doubtful that he would have room to bring the ship into the narrow space. The second engine was spitting badly. Rollie told his crew to brace themselves. He wormed the sick ship into a straight stretch of the river and set it down on the water. It was very shallow and the big plane, roaring at 150 miles per hour, shot spray over the jungle. Rollie's head bumped the controls and his eye was badly gashed. The radio operator's chest was crushed and his arms and shoulders burned. They dragged him out of the plane and the entire crew ran and ducked behind a bank.

For five minutes the stricken plane, burning in the river, sent a wild stream of .50-caliber bullets into the jungle, because it was fully armed and cartridge belts were in the guns. It was a weird scene.

Two hours later, natives approached warily to see what all the shooting was about. They helped the airmen out of the brush and took them to their village. They nursed the boys and took them back to civilization a few days later.

I'm convinced that the thing which saved Rollie was his flying skill and the kind of experience he had behind him—years and years of barnstorming with a tri-motor Ford. Of course, the fact that he had no nerves helped a lot. The last I heard of him, he was flying four-engine transports for TWA out of Washington.

Shortly before I left Pan-American Air Ferries, I was giving some final checks to new pilots after the instructors had run them through the mill. One of the pilots I had under my wing was Mario Orozco, a likable Mexican lad. He told me that he had done some airline flying in Mexico before he came to the States. I checked him in a Lockheed Ten, a small twin-engine ship. Mario did a nice job of flying—smooth turns, nice landings and good instrument flying—but I refused to check him out. I didn't wash him out, I simply told him to put in four or five hours of practice and then I would OK him.

My reason was his take-offs.

It appeared that Mario always forgot something on those take-offs. One time he would forget to raise the flaps. Next time he would forget to put his props in low pitch, or it was something else. He was angry when I finally told him: "Mario, you fly very well but you must break yourself of that habit of neglect on the take-offs. A mistake on a take-off will cost you your life some day. It doesn't look so bad in this little Lockheed, but it will kill you when you start flying those heavily loaded bombers."

We didn't speak for weeks. Then, soon after I left Pan-American, I got the news. Mario Orozco had left Pan-American, too, and accepted a position flying a big Lockheed for the Brazilian Government. He was killed when he left his flaps down on a take-off.

By dealing with Mario as I had, I built up a reputation as a check pilot, but when I turned down a man, I sometimes made an enemy. Nonetheless, I always felt that perhaps I had saved his life and the lives of his crewmen.

In November, 1942, I left Pan-American to join TWA, operating four-engine equipment out of Washington, D. C. I knew when I left Pan-Am that I had left the best all-around group of pilots in the world. They could, and did, take every and any kind of plane built and put it wherever they were told. Many of them are now in the Air Transport Command, stationed in Memphis or in Nashville. They are still flying all kinds of planes overseas. Without them, and the hundreds of other ferry pilots in the Air Transport Command, no fighter pilot could pull a trigger nor bomber pilot drop a load of bombs on German or Japanese soil.

Men like Captain Derryberry, Jack Wantz and Howard Smart all wear the "S" in their wings which denotes "Service Pilot." That means they were good civilian pilots long before this war began.

Chapter

13

FLYING for TWA was the first time I had done commercial work for an airline. We did not ferry ships; we carried only passengers and cargo. Once more, too, I ran up against the checkout, and this time it was worst of all.

It was strange to me, after flying back and forth across the Atlantic for two years, that still I had to be checked out by an airline pilot who had been pushing a DC-3 up and down an airway in the United States.

For the first few weeks, though, I went to an excellent ground school to check up on navigation, meteorology, engineering and code. Then I checked out in a four-engine Douglas C-54, the largest land plane in use in the United States. I found it a cinch after flying the faster and more difficult B-24's and B-26's. Once again I found that the airline pilot's extreme conservatism and his routine flying up and down the same familiar radio beams, day after day, year after year, was a hindrance instead of a help on trans-atlantic flying.

No airline official would agree with me, of course. The airlines have spent years and tremendous sums of money

educating the public to believe that the airline pilot is the best in the world. As I pointed out earlier in this book, the airline pilot is unexcelled at the specialized task of flying his own particular route, because of constant practice and because he knows every mile of that airway and every radio range on it by heart. He flies the same kind of plane every day, usually a Douglas DC-3, which is probably the best transport in the world but ferry pilots call it the old lady's airplane because it is so easy to fly and lands so slowly.

While I was acting as instructor and check pilot for the Royal Air Force Ferry Command, and for Pan-American Air Ferries, and as a check pilot in Ottawa for the RCAF, I learned a lot about pilots. The Navy flyer is certain he is the best-trained pilot in the world, as is the Army flyer. Both have a certain amount of contempt for the civilian pilot. The airline pilot looks down on them all.

In my opinion, they are all wrong. I found that every pilot was an individual case; there are good and bad pilots in all categories. The best pilots we had on the North and South Atlantic were pilots who had spent years of barnstorming or free-lance civilian flying and had, in addition, some Army or Navy training. A small percentage were strictly airline trained. Almost without fail, whenever I cut both engines on an airline pilot in a test flight, he was unable to make a "forced landing" in the nearest available field. Naturally, it was not his fault; he simply didn't do that on the airlines.

On the other hand, just try to fool Rollie or Art Inman, who also flew for TWA but were expert barnstorming pilots before they joined the organization. They were typical of the old-time pilot who had flown all makes of airplanes in and out of all types of fields.

A prime example of this was the initiation the Inman brothers and I had to go through when we joined TWA. We had flown everything from little 40-horsepower Cubs to four-engine bombers. We knew the South Atlantic route like a worn book. I also knew the north route into Scotland. Yet we were treated like student pilots by the older airline captains. We were accustomed to flying airplanes that were brought in at 145 and 150 miles per hour, and at overloads that would frighten the average airline captain, unless he was a member of that courageous and highly skilled group of China National Aviation Corporation pilots who flew the "hump" from India to China.

I stuck it out while the various check pilots told me how to sit in the pilot's seat, which way to push the throttles to accelerate, and how to land an airplane that flew like a baby carriage after the hot stuff I had flown.

Then we got the news that we must fly a trip from the co-pilot's seat on the right side. We knew that any airline would require that much, regardless of our experience, so we suffered through it. My first trip was from Washington, D. C., to Scotland. We had a Boeing Stratoliner, or as the Army calls it, a C-75. It is a good, reliable four-engine

transport formerly used on the transcontinental lines. Our crew consisted of the captain, a veteran airlines pilot; myself as second captain; two navigators; two radio operators and a flight engineer. I thought of the tremendous payload we had to carry to pay the crew's salary, ranging from the captain's \$1,100 per month down to the radio operators, who were paid far more than the Army officers and soldiers we carried as passengers.

Our first stop was Montreal, where we spent the night. The following day we flew to an airport north of Newfoundland. It was bitterly cold and bleak. I had been ill on the way and immediately checked in at the Army hospital. But the next day I was shipshape again and we flew an uneventful trip to Greenland, where we landed on a vast steel mat carpeting a sea of mud. There was only one way to land or take-off there, and that was downhill.

The captain had decided definitely that he didn't want to attempt a nonstop flight to Scotland, so there we stayed in the coldest, muddiest airport I had ever seen, a thousand miles from nowhere. I thought of the times I had flown this ocean nonstop, with small twin-engine bombers that did not even carry a co-pilot, and with only half the load of gasoline this comfortable Stratoliner had jammed in its tanks. We slept overnight in wooden barracks that were quite comfortable.

We spent two days in that airport, waiting for the

weather. No women around except Eskimos across the fjord, and no one was allowed to pay social calls on them. We slept and listened to the phonograph, which unceasingly blared the explicit lyrics of *Der Fuehrer's Face*. We tried fishing through the ice, and caught nothing.

On the third day, we took off for Reykjavik, Iceland. It was a nasty trip, light ice on the wings, freezing rain. We landed into a fifty-mile wind, and bedded down for the night in Nissen huts. Next day we took off for Prestwick, Scotland, my old hangout. It was a far different trip than the ones I had made months before over the Atlantic. Now they had radio ranges all the way.

We took off under a low, broken ceiling of 500 to 1,000 feet. We never got above 1,000 feet, from Reykjavik through the first four hours of the flight. I felt extremely unnecessary. I hadn't touched a control since we started from Washington and I resented it. I'd flown this stretch under much tougher conditions, and not as a co-pilot. I sat there, hired as a captain, but useless.

Finally the clouds began hitting the water in places and we dipped down to where we flew from 150 to 300 feet over the ocean, partially on instruments, in a rain that was daggerlike as its frozen spray beat the sides of the plane. I glanced at the outside temperature gauge and it read 35 degrees Fahrenheit. There was constant danger of icing, and if we should lose an engine at that altitude. . . . I

wanted to take the controls and climb to a safer altitude. But I wrestled with my tongue and finally held it. I reminded myself that I was still on a checkout flight.

We passed over (I could almost say alongside) a small vessel pitching and tossing in the rough, icy sea. An hour out of Ireland, the captain climbed to 4,500 feet on instruments and hung there until we hit a radio beam, then came uneventfully into Prestwick. I was glad to see land, but I was even more unhappy about the business of checking out when I learned at Prestwick that after the boring six days it had taken us to reach Scotland, another ship had left two days after us and had beaten us in, weather or no weather.

At that moment I determined never to fly on the right side of an airplane again.

I found the Prestwick airdrome changed. Now there were large concrete runways. When I had flown in there in 1941, it was a grass field, well camouflaged. Sober pilots could look down on the countryside and swear that stone-walls and hedges were on the landing strips. It was a rather small grass field with no runways in that era. I remember that in the old RAF ferry days a pilot making his first Atlantic crossing came into Prestwick and made several passes at the field before he could make up his mind that he was going to settle on soft grass instead of crashing into a stonewall. Gasoline shortage finally forced him to take the word of the radio.

Safely, and boringly, back in Washington, I spent the next few months attending ground school. We had literally dozens of second officers who had been with TWA six months and did nothing but draw \$400 a month to attend ground school. First officers drew down \$800 and captains \$1,100. In addition, \$8 a day expenses were paid when the crew was away from Washington.

My only eventful trip for TWA, I suppose, was the time we brought Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt from Prestwick to Washington. Milo Campbell and I flew the President's wife back to the capital, and enjoyed it immensely. Her secretary, Malvina Thompson, was with her. I can say sincerely that she was the most gracious and easily pleased passenger I have ever flown. At regular intervals I would send a report of our altitude, speed, and position back to her. The entire crew of nine had a grand time signing them both on their short-snorter bills.

We came into Newfoundland, at 2:25 A.M., after a fourteen-hour-and-thirty-minute flight from Scotland, had a quick breakfast and pushed on to Washington, arriving there eight hours and forty minutes later. The total time from Scotland to Washington was twenty-three hours and ten minutes, during which time Milo and I never left the cockpit, except for the breakfast in Newfoundland.

The President and several secret service agents were waiting at the Washington airport when we landed, but instead of rushing out to greet her husband, Mrs. Roosevelt clam-

bered through the maze of things in the plane to thank each member of the crew personally "for a splendid flight." It *had* been a good flight. We crossed the Atlantic at about 6,000 feet and had no weather at all. Naturally, I've kept the nice letter Mrs. Roosevelt sent me later.

Chapter

14

Nor long after the flight with Mrs. Roosevelt, I made my last trip for TWA. I had been loitering in Washington so long, doing practically nothing, that the letters I had been getting from friends in the Army Air Forces sounded doubly attractive.

I applied for a commission.

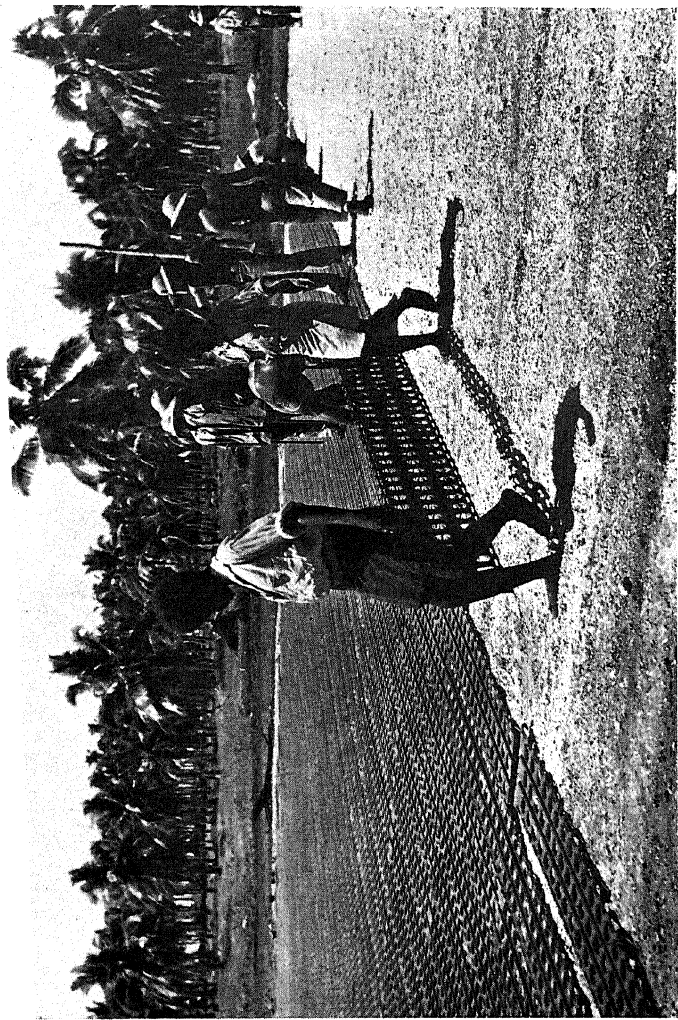
Waiting for the commission to come through, I handed in my resignation to TWA and made my last trip, this time in a huge Douglas C-54. It was the finest airplane I had ever flown. On transatlantic runs it was equipped to carry a crew of seven to nine men, twenty-six passengers and 3,700 gallons of gasoline. Yet it was easy to handle and a pleasure to fly.

It was so different from ferrying twin-engine bombers across uncharted waters and wastes that this trip was almost a picnic. The loss of one engine on a two-engine bomber meant that you had overmatched yourself with the ocean, and there was always only enough gasoline to get you to your destination. But flying a Douglas C-54 meant comfort and safety.

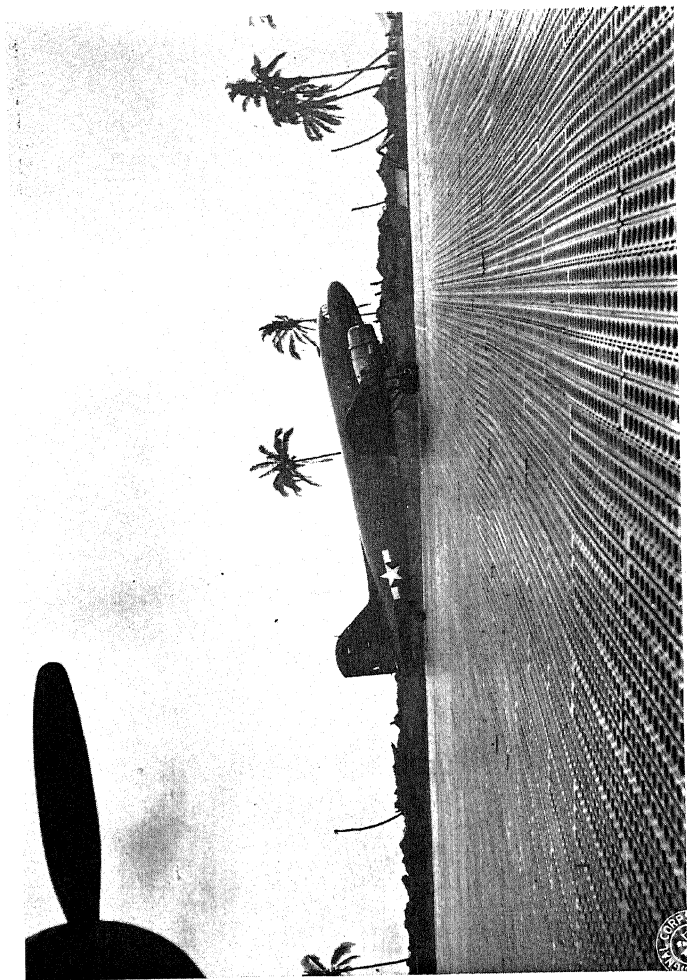
We left Washington and on the fourth day were in Accra. It was a leisurely trip down through Trinidad, Brazil and across to Africa. We turned around the night we arrived there and brought twenty-five passengers back to Natal. Out in the Atlantic, we stopped at Ascension Island for breakfast. Tiny Ascension, only three miles wide and six miles long, is 1,450 miles from Natal and 1,360 from Accra. It takes expert navigating to hit that pin point on the nose. It is all rock and sand. Rangy cliffs rear into the skies on either side of the one runway and you get the idea, coming in, that you must bring the plane down in a tunnel. The pilots always called Ascension Shangri-la.

I'll never forget the last few minutes I spent in Accra. I was strolling along the beach, jabbering with the natives in their grass huts, when I spied a huge monkey. I bargained for the animal and bought him for ten shillings, about \$2.10. Then I didn't know what to do with it. About two hours before the take-off, I cornered the purser of my crew and talked him into helping me slip the monk aboard the plane. Walsh, the purser, was blue with fright as Jake, the newly named monkey, came loping into the plane at the end of a rope.

I wanted the monkey, but I didn't know how to hide it from the passengers. I thought about the cloakroom, but I knew my passengers would be in and out of there. Then I thought of pinning him beneath a huge wooden crate. I found what I wanted, with the side knocked out. But



Making An Airport, III. Here the locale is different but the technique is the same.
Steel matting is laid as the last step.



Making An Airport, IV. A completed field at Bougainville receives the first South Pacific Combat Air Transport plane as it taxis down the new landing mat.

I hadn't planned on such a battle with Jake. He protested vehemently against being placed under the box and it was a wild, funny fifteen minutes before I cornered him in the plane and quickly slipped the makeshift cage over his head on the cloakroom floor. I slapped a heavy tool chest on top of the crate to weigh the old boy down and tucked the rope inside. Then I decided to hold my breath all the way to Brazil!

As I greeted the passengers, I was torn between laughter and fear of what they would think. I could imagine the consternation 6,000 feet up there in the clouds if Jake suddenly broke his cage and began playing leapfrog over the passengers' laps. I watched the travelers hang their clothing in the cloakroom and was amazed when Jake didn't shriek his presence.

We landed at Ascension and still no one had discovered Jake. I began to wonder if he had smothered. We took off for Natal and landed there without incident.

I had a monkey and didn't know what to do with it as we settled to a halt at the airdrome. The customs officials were on hand and several Brazilian officials were standing on the edge of the field to greet some of the passengers. The gangplank went down, stretching some fifteen feet into the air to the cabin door, and my passengers began filing down to the field.

The last passenger to leave was a pompous little colonel who had attracted my attention on the trip. He was ex-

tremely dignified, the only person in the plane to keep his tie on and his hat straight on his head. As he strode majestically down the gangplank, I heard a noise and I knew the worst was about to happen. Jake, wild after his forced incarceration, came bounding out right behind the colonel. The big monk was walking upright and the colonel started running. I nearly folded in the middle from laughter. So did the rest of the passengers and everybody on the field. I had my orders to return to Accra immediately, so I left Jake tied in Mrs. Knab's front yard.

We crossed the ocean again the next morning in a return flight to Accra with a Boeing Stratoliner, the Zuni. Another captain took the C-54 back into Washington. It was my last flight and I enjoyed the stay at Accra. There were three days on the beach, a lovely white sandy expanse that threaded for miles along the edge of the jungle. We paid native boys, paddling huge canoes, a shilling to take us out in the surf. Ten of them, kneeling, sang a weird chant as they paddled. Two of us sat in front. Several hundred yards out from the beach, they turned around, caught a nice wave and we bounded in like an express train. We turned over a few times, but it was fun, and a change to be in the water instead of flying over it hour after hour.

Martha Raye, the screen star, came through on the third day, after a trip over the African front entertaining our troops. She was terrific. We had a visit together and I went down to watch her one-woman show for the boys in an

outdoor theater. I shall never forget the way Martha stood out there in the jungles and sent morale to its highest peak with her version of *Pig's Foot Pete*.

All the way back to Natal and Washington, I could think of little except entering the Army Air Forces, and when I got back to base my commission as a captain was waiting for me and the strange life of a ferry pilot—civilian type—was ended.

I shipped out for Fort Worth, Texas, and the headquarters of the Flying Training Command. I had asked for that assignment because I felt that my years of flying multi-engine airplanes as an instructor and pilot would enable me to assist, in some way, in the training of our pilots.

I was assigned as assistant air inspector at Fort Worth Army Air Field, under Major Grassy Hinton, a great and grand Army officer, the most conscientious man I have ever known. My duties at Fort Worth, where there is a big four-engine pilot training school, were to assist Major Hinton in keeping an eye on the whole training schedule in general. Particularly, I was assigned to ride with various instructors and student pilots and make constructive suggestions and criticisms.

For the first time, I became acquainted with Texans in their native state. I had served and flown with Texans in the RCAF, then later with men like Don Teel and Watt King in the Royal Air Force Ferry Command. Again, with Pan-American Air Ferries, I had found a liberal sprinkling

of big, good-natured Texans like Jerry Creswell, and old Derryberry, and Tex Harwell. Sometimes I had grown a little fed up with their constant bragging about their native state. Now I began to understand why. After I had been in Fort Worth two weeks, I could fully understand why the Texan is such a rabid booster for his home state.

Out there I found the last frontier of rugged individualism. It is a feeling I can't describe, yet it is as tangible and solid as a rock. And every gasoline station attendant, every soda fountain clerk, and on up to the biggest businessman in town leaves you with a, "Be sure and come back now." They say it as though they meant it, with a grin and a warmth in their voice.

The most popular officers' lounge in the country is on the second floor of the Texas Hotel. No Army or Navy officer ever passes through Fort Worth without dropping in to see Rosamond Hott, the charming hostess there whose memory for names and faces rivals the legendary one of Jim Farley, and who has converted hundreds of stanch Northerners and Easterners at least to wishing they were Texans.

After breaking bread with the peoples of foreign lands over half the world, it took one short tour of duty in Texas to give me a clear picture of what we are fighting for, both at home and abroad.

On September 9, 1943, I was recruited by the Treasury Department to assist in the Third War Loan Drive. Be-

cause I had experience as a public speaker and announcer, I was assigned to accompany a group of Hollywood screen celebrities and returned war heroes on a tour of the Middle West to sell bonds. I was master of ceremonies. We appeared at outdoor rallies and in theaters and at banquets. Once more I got a liberal education in the generosity and true spirit of the average American citizen. At one banquet in the Silver Glade room of the Skirvin Tower Hotel in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, we raised more than thirteen million dollars in war bond sales. One wealthy oil man paid five million dollars for his dinner.

I'll always remember that banquet. Not for the movie stars present, nor the array of millionaires in the audience, but because I was so scared. Flying the ocean was a cinch compared to the job I faced that night. There were three toastmasters. The Mayor of Sasakwa was first. He was a regular Will Rogers, hat crumpled on his head, keeping the crowd roaring with barbed thrusts at local politicians. Next came a minister, the Reverend Bill Alexander. He was a handsome six-foot-two former football player, who swayed the audience with his eloquent oratory. I was third.

My throat was dry and I licked my lips. I had never lost poise doing radio broadcasts nor facing huge audiences wherever we went, but following those two grand speakers made me realize my own insignificance. Worst of all, as I sat there on the speakers' stand I saw in the front row

two full colonels, a general, and three Navy captains. The two silver bars on my shoulders seemed awfully tiny.

While waiting my turn, I had been picking away at my roast chicken with considerable difficulty. I was wedged in tightly between the governor's wife on my left and the speaker's pedestal on my right. Right-handed, and not daring to crowd the governor's wife, I was making the best of things when I heard myself introduced as the next speaker.

Somehow I managed to stand up, and without being quite sure of what I was saying, I stared at an attractive redhead in the third row and said: "I would like to assure the charming young lady in the third row that I have had proper bringing up, and I do know that I should bring the chicken up to my mouth, and not my mouth down to the chicken—but did you see the way I was squeezed in up here?"

The crowd loved it, and from there on it was easier.

Later I was presented with a letter citing me as an "ambassador of good will" for the City of Oklahoma City, in appreciation of what I had done in the war bond drive. I am very proud of that letter. It is good until 1947. Some day I'm going to try it on a traffic cop and find out what it's worth.

Chapter

15

BEFORE I finish my story, I want to get one thing straightened out. Too many people seem to have the idea that an Air Transport Command pilot is one who isn't good enough for combat flying and now pushes a cargo plane between Dallas and New Orleans, or between Miami and New York. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Army Air Transport Command is divided into two parts, the ferrying division and the domestic transport division. The former ferries all types of planes all over the world, and it is the more dangerous. The transport division flies cargo and personnel all over the world. The pilots of both are, in many cases, the pick of the Air Forces. Their experience and knowledge, in general, is greater than that of the combat pilot.

The difference lies in publicity. The stories of the combat pilots are told in the newspapers every day, but the heroic struggles of the Air Transport Command pilots are seldom brought to light.

Of the countless air epics in the books of the Air Transport pilots, both civilian and military, in this war, one

stands out like a beacon light. It is the saga of the Flying Fortress which crashed in the bitter cold of a Greenland ice cap. Five months of death, frustration, disease and courage that cost men their lives had to be endured before the story ended. Seven men of the crew were taken off the frozen waste by Colonel Bernt Balchen, the noted explorer and Arctic flyer, in a giant Navy flying boat that made hazardous trips into the wilderness of death and skidded to landings on snow, not water.

On November 9, 1942, the Fortress, fully manned, started out over the northern Atlantic route on a ferrying mission to England. It was full of young American flyers, the Army personnel that took over the route and has done an incredible job under adverse conditions.

The Fortress picked up distress signals from another plane which had started for England and had been forced down. Approximate positions were given and the Fortress turned off course and hurried on a mercy mission. The weather was nasty and cold winds shook the plane like a man with a chill. Piloting the ship was Captain Armand L. Monteverde, of Anaheim, California, while the co-pilot was a youngster from Dallas, named Lieutenant Harry E. Spencer, Jr.

No trace of the missing plane could be found and Captain Monteverde was trying for a Greenland base when the big bird crumpled and crashed near the country's west coast. It spun into the great ice banks, crashing with a force

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

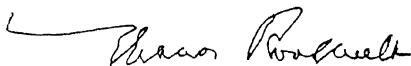
March 27, 1943

My dear Mr. Wynn:

Ever since my return flight from Great Britain, I have meant to write to thank you for the many courtesies you showed us which made the flight very pleasant and comfortable. I have told many people how much I enjoyed my return trip and how much I admired the way in which the mechanics of the flight were handled, and I am sorry I never got around before this, to telling you.

I have flown enough to know how much depends on the ability and the attention to detail on the part of the pilots, and this is my very belated note of appreciation.

Very sincerely yours,



Mr. Egar J. Wynn
310 Rucker Place
Alexandria, Virginia

Mrs. Roosevelt expressed her appreciation for Captain Wynn's piloting of the TWA transport which brought her back from England in 1943.

Trans Oceanic Pilots' Association

Charter



Member's

Certificate of Membership

This is to certify that *Edgar J. Wynn*

has become a member of the professional society of "Trans Oceanic Pilots" who have consecrated their lives and services in the interest of mankind, whether in war or peace, and whose sole duty is to assist in the establishment of peace, and thereafter promote harmonious relations and understanding through all nations and all races throughout the world.

Glennell F. Oakes, Sec.

Myron J. Haggis, Vice Pres.

Edgar J. Wynn

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that broke it in two. The radio was wrecked and the crew dazed. It is hard to describe the cold in that sector. No one would believe its cruelty. But Sergeant Paul J. Spina, of Frankford, New York, can attest its severity. Catapulted out of the plane as it burrowed into the ice cap, he landed in a snowbank. One arm was broken above the wrist and both of his heavy fleece gloves were buried in the snow. Before other dazed members of the crew could find him and carry him to the wreckage of the plane, both his hands had frozen.

Hastily the crew rigged up quarters in the tail of the broken fuselage. Only limited rations were aboard and there was no heat or light. It looked like a date with death for the Army youngsters. Blustery, high winds pounded at the wreck and snow piled against its sides and over the top. Ten days the men endured these hardships. They didn't venture out of the comparative security of their hiding place for two days. They expected to freeze to death.

Panic seized them as their situation became more perilous when a fissure opened in the ice below the tail section, but they roused themselves and fastened their living quarters to the forward part of the plane with ropes. Cold frosted his fingers and took the delicacy from his touch, but Corporal Loren H. Howarth, of La Crosse, Wisconsin, worked hour after hour with the only hope of life left—the radio. Days and nights went by and finally the skill and

ingenuity of this American kid were rewarded. The radio flickered signals faintly. As Corporal Howarth worked, they got stronger and finally the outfit was usable. Signals were intercepted and the position of the plane was established.

On the fifteenth day, fifteen days of cold and suffering, Colonel Balchen's plane droned in out of the snow and supplies were dropped. It was the impossible come true. At the same time, Lieutenant Max H. Demorest, of Flint, Michigan, and Sergeant Don T. Tetley, of San Antonio, Texas, set out with two small motor sleds from a weather station not many miles from the crash. The end of that attempted rescue expedition was tragic. The two men reached the plane on foot after leaving their sleds several hundred yards distant, but Lieutenant Demorest lost his life when they started back for the sleds. Less than a hundred yards from the plane, as he returned triumphantly with the sled to take out the wounded man, he fell screaming into a hundred-foot crevasse. Attempts to rescue him failed. No rope was long enough, no ledges could be found. His voice was never heard.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant John A. Pritchard, Jr., of Burbank, California, a Coast Guard flyer, made a daring run into the snowy prison and landed his Grumman plane near the wreck. He loaded Sergeant Alexander F. Tucciarone of New York, and Staff Sergeant Lloyd Puryear of Lebanon, Kentucky, into his plane and flew them safely to the cutter *Northland*, in Atlantic waters. He returned next day.

In the midst of the hunt for Lieutenant Demorest, he was ordered to take off immediately for the cutter because of a deep fog closing in. The Grumman roared off the snowbanks, but failed to gain altitude. It crashed and killed all aboard—gallant Lieutenant Pritchard, Corporal Howarth, and Radioman Benjamin A. Bottoms, Coast Guard, of Salem, Massachusetts.

Four men had died thus far in the tragedy.

Cold penetrated the boots of Lieutenant William F. O'Hara, of Scranton, Pennsylvania, and his feet froze. Gangrene developed and became so serious that Captain Monteverde placed O'Hara on a sled and sent out three men to get him to medical aid. Lieutenant Spencer, Sergeant Tetley and Private Clarence Wedel, of Canton, Kansas, started over the treacherous snow and ice with their stricken flyer. Only a mile and a half away, Private Wedel dropped out of sight, swallowed by a deep crevasse. The rescue attempt was hopeless. Four miles farther on, the frozen little band halted, the sled broken. Now the men were stranded in two camps.

Foul weather became worse and the impassable terrain made it difficult, if not impossible, to reach them overland. The Air Transport Command, braving weather that would ground any plane, kept coming through the front and dropping supplies.

Days later, weeks after the crash of the Fortress, a ski-plane borrowed from the Maritime Central Airways of

Canada made a valiant attempt to reach the doomed Americans, but it crashed in a fjord. The pilot and co-pilot were uninjured and eventually stumbled into the rescue base.

It was February, three months later, when Balchen's plane came out of the blizzard one day and landed successfully near the sled camp. The big Navy flying boat negotiated the snow and all the men there—Spencer, O'Hara and Tetley—were hurried into the plane and rescued. Both of Lieutenant O'Hara's feet had to be amputated.

The weather closed in and the winds howled and Balchen was unable to return. It was March when Balchen finally got back into the sector again. On the plane with him were dog teams and men experienced in Arctic rescue work. Balchen landed at the old sled camp and the dog teams set out. They returned with Captain Monteverde, Technical Sergeant Alfred C. Best, of Waco, Texas, and Sergeant Spina. On April 6, Balchen finished one of the toughest flying jobs done in this war. He landed at the sled camp again and took out all the remaining survivors.

It was this story that Lieutenant Spencer, Captain Monteverde and Sergeant Tetley told to President Roosevelt in the White House, weeks later. By their side was their chief, General Henry H. Arnold, Air Forces commander. Not a word of the rescue attempts had leaked out of official channels during those five months of hell, although relatives had been kept advised of the rescue work.

So it is that many such stories have never been told.

None, perhaps, is so tough or dramatic as the Greenland episode, but the other stories are essentially the same. War-time restrictions have kept them secret, but some day books will be filled with the stirring tales of these flights and rescues.

Another story that had the world gasping when it finally became public property was the Lac O'Connor rescue. Twenty men aboard a giant plane flying in from a North Atlantic base made an emergency landing in the vast wilds of Quebec. Rescue planes found them, then lost them again. There was no loss of life or damage to the plane, but the story was a thriller nonetheless.

Northwest winds, pushing the snow in blinding clouds, rose above fifty miles per hour as the ATC transport ducked in overland from the choppy North Atlantic. Civilian and military personnel, still not officially identified, were aboard. Seven of the civilians were coming back to the United States for rest and medical treatment. The pilot of the plane was Captain Owen Joseph O'Connor, "Chuck" to the commercial pilots who had known him for years as one of American Airlines' multi-million-milers. He was on loan to the Air Transport Command. Chuck had a brilliant flying history dating back to the first World War, when he was one of seven men assigned to pioneer the Navy's air arm.

The First Officer was Charles Russell Gilfillen, who didn't have O'Connor's personality or experience, but was

still a fine flyer. He was the man who kept a diary of the subsequent nightmare, in weather 70 degrees below zero, when the menu consisted of owl soup.

Captain O'Connor, trapped at high altitude with great sheaths of ice on the plane, radioed to an American Airlines base that he was going down to 18,000 feet to shake the ice. It didn't work. Down to 3,000 feet they went and the navigator couldn't take his bearings because of the weather. In this wilderness, O'Connor was homing on the wrong station, a Lake Erie base far to the west of his destination. The station was receiving him, but he couldn't hear the reply he strained to catch. Finally he radioed: "Low on gas. I've got to land this ship. Landing on uncharted lake."

In a miraculous landing, he dodged trees and skidded to a stop on a lake a mile and a half long and about three plane lengths wide. Next morning, O'Connor and the navigator took solar shots and radioed the base. The bitter, penetrating cold had damaged the octant, however, and the position they radioed was far off.

From distant bases, twelve giant transports, loaded with medicine, food and supplies, roared off in search of the grounded transport. Some of the radio messages from the stricken plane had been intercepted by two ships in the air, and using their direction finders, they had placed the stranded craft within eighteen miles of its actual position. Eighteen miles in that wilderness is the breadth of the ocean, however.

Coming in on O'Connor's battery transmitter, they hurried to the rescue but the battery gave up feebly and died, and the failing gas supply of the two planes forced them to turn back even before they had sighted the lost ship.

Four hours later on the same day, Captain Clyde Wilkins, circling in the darkness, sighted them by their flares. He signaled, dropped supplies, took his bearings and returned to base. Later in the night, a terrible blizzard struck. All aircraft in the area were grounded for three days. On the fifth day, more than thirty transports were scouring all the known and estimated positions in the area and plans were under way to bring thirty more planes from LaGuardia Field, New York, to join in the search.

It was at dawn on the fourth day of a month never since specified when the plane was forced down. On the ninth day of the same month, Captain Ernie Gann, author-flyer and personal friend of O'Connor, sighted them. Gann had already put many of his adventures and some fictionalized ones into print in two books he had written. With Gann when he spotted the plane was "Breezy" Winn. The stranded ship was almost invisible against the snow, but Gann dropped food and all planes searching in the area raced in to take bearings on Gann's plane to determine the rescue spot definitely. It wasn't until the sixth day of the second month that the last man was brought out; he had spent thirty-four days in the sub-zero temperatures of that wilderness.

Soon after the plane had been forced down, four men went on watch, cutting trees and keeping fires blazing. The first meal was hot water, heated in sandwich boxes. Then came a can of soup for twenty men. Four ptarmigan were added to the soup for supper. Soup, two blackbirds and a can of tuna fish constituted the menu for the next few days.

On the third day of the forced landing, huddled around the fire, they heard a plane. Very pistols shot signals into the air, but the plane motors died in the distance and there was nothing but the white, quiet world again. Later the plane returned and flashed landing lights. Captain Watkins had been the first man to spot them. He dropped sleeping bags and three large boxes of K rations.

Next day they built lean-tos for those who were ill. They ate a little. They slept. They watched. Days passed. Rations were almost exhausted, the radio didn't work, and hoarfrost covered the inside of the plane and coated the bedrolls.

On the morning of the ninth of the first month, they chewed their rations a little more slowly than usual. That afternoon, the roar of a plane broke the silence. A C-87 had spotted them. The entire camp turned and waved frantically. Someone spotted another C-87. Then three more. Then a C-47, and another. To the men on the little frozen lake, it looked as though all of LaGuardia Field had turned out to rescue them.

One of the planes dropped a note: "Dear Chuck: Thank

God, we found you. A C-49 with supplies should be here if they heard our signals. They will land. We will guard you until something happens."

The hunt was over. Now it was only necessary to bring them out.

Captain Fred Lord, piloting one of the rescue ships, thought he could land and do the job. With a gallery of planes looking on, he slowed to seventy miles an hour and eased her in, almost doing a ground loop. Then came the plaintive moan on the radio: "I'm stuck."

Next day Lord and the men made a snow plow and streaked back and forth across the ice, staking off a runway. But the men were so weakened by cold and scanty diet that they didn't have the strength to pull the plow too long.

It was too cold to sleep in the plane. The radio operator's hand froze decoding messages. In the following days, planes dropped stoves, food, shovels and blow torches. The campers built another hut and cooked for twenty-five men in one bucket. They got sick of K ration, and green spruce didn't burn very well. Nobody was ever warm. Frostbites were bothersome and painful. Finally the radio batteries played out and not a plane was heard again for days. There was nothing at all from the outside world.

On the dawn of the seventeenth day, three C-47's stormed the place. If a ship could find them without a radio, the men knew they weren't lost again, as they had feared. The Army arrived with more transport planes.

Chutes and packages were dropped all over the lake—tents, stoves, hams, beans, bread, flour and even syrup for hot cakes.

Next day the tireless efforts of the radiomen brought results and the radio hummed again. The tents went up. Men shaved eighteen-day beards. On the twentieth day, the Army announced officially that the plane had been found, but it wasn't until six days later that they succeeded in clearing a runway for Lord's plane. The C-87 was another matter.

Word came that a ski ship was coming to take them out. On the sixth of the second month, the last of the men was moved. A few weeks later, Breezy Winn and a crew returned to the marooned ship, filled her with gas, thawed her out and flew her to LaGuardia Field.

Now they call it Lac O'Connor.

The danger, courage and pioneering exemplified in this story are symbolic of all ferry flights.

Early in 1944, Major General Harold Lee George, commanding general of the Air Transport Command, commented that wartime operation of the Army Air Forces' Air Transport Command had already resulted in developments that would advance peacetime commercial aviation twenty-five years. And it was true. Under the extreme pressure of wartime necessity, the transport command had

developed an efficient worldwide airline for both passengers and matériel. In the eighteen months ending in December, 1943, the ATC carried more than 300,000 passengers to and from all corners of the earth, and during that time not a single accident occurred in the Atlantic area, nor was there a mishap in the Pacific in twelve months of activity in that sector.

"We have proved conclusively," General George commented, "that a worldwide airline, with service comparable to the best commercial lines in the United States, can be operated. And we have had to prove it during wartime."

General George commended the United States-China flights of the ATC, in which planes cover 16,000 miles in three and a half days. He also disclosed that the big planes even carry giant trucks which are sawed in pieces, transported to the battle fronts and then welded together again for service.

The crossing of oceans certainly came a long way in the three and a half years I studied its progress. Now there is no longer the uncertainty of whether the job can be done, nor do they whisper about "possibilities." It is simply done, now, without much fanfare.

Typical of the growth is American Airlines, which was a small outfit known as Texas Air Transport only a few years ago. In January, 1944, it was operating many transatlantic flights a month, and by the end of its first year of interna-

tional operation had registered several hundred overseas flights to every continent in the world, and to twenty-seven countries outside North America.

On July 20, 1943, the Air Transport Command took a group of Air Transport crews to fly supplies into China from a base in India. It was August when the first Consolidated C-87's arrived at an Indian base. In the next four months these crews, composed of men who had never ventured outside of American airplanes, made hundreds of crossings over the rugged and feared Burma Road of the air.

Early in 1944, the first story about this vast operation, which had been kept secret, was released for publication from headquarters at Assam, where Brigadier General C. R. Smith, former president of American Airlines, checked the six-hundred-mile route over the 28,000-foot Himalayas.

Commercial airlines, teaming with the Army's Air Transport Command, have cut new sky trails over the world. As General George said, these pioneers, dating back to the first North Atlantic flights by the old RAF Ferry Command, have advanced aviation a quarter of a century in only a few months.

In the spectacular Alaskan operation in the summer of 1942, when invasion by Japan appeared imminent, crews of the Air Transport Command dropped everything and joined with other crews in flying converted DC-3's night and day to that theater. Supplies the experts said would

never be flown by air—barrels of gas and oil, load after load of lumber and nails—were ferried into the desolate country. Supplies for the Alcan Highway went into stripped-down cabins. Troops in full battle dress were flown to defend those lonely Arctic outposts.

Flying the Burma Road of the air, "The Hump," remains probably the most hazardous job in the business. Frequently a jeep has to be driven down the runway to scatter water buffalo and Brahma cows before aircraft can take off or land. Operations on the route began in monsoon season, when runways were flooded and flying often was done entirely on instruments, when men were ill with dysentery and repairs were made in the open in intolerable heat or punishing rain. In spite of everything, the ATC crews flew several trips daily up to the end of 1943, and had carried several million pounds of cargo into China. In addition to transport duties, personnel of the commercial companies in India assisted in giving instruction to Army flight and ground crews stationed there. Their base was a scant distance from the nearest Jap base. The planes were unarmed and only the pilots' skill made it possible for them to reach their objectives with precious cargo.

But it is not within my province to tell the story of the Air Transport Command in these pages; it is one of the great stories of this war and deserves a full narration.

To the ferry pilots, the men who have made air transport a reality, men whom I have known over the world and with

whom I have flown, I offer a toast. Victory could never be accomplished without their daring, their disregard for their own safety, their pioneering which shattered the old belief that the air was limited.

These men have proved the air is boundless, that it can be conquered.

Captain Edgar J. Wynn, born in Boston in 1913, first learned to fly at 16. His home is in Worcester, Massachusetts. As he says: "I have always flown"; and his flying experience has included barnstorming around the country, stunt flying, doing delayed parachute jumps at rural carnivals. For a time he conducted his own flying school at Syracuse, New York. Following this he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force, becoming an officer and instructor. In 1941 he joined the Royal Air Force Ferry Command and became Captain-Navigator. "I ferried bombers across the North Atlantic to England, non-stop," he says. "Many of us disappeared or crashed. Forty-four of our ferry boys were killed in four days. . . ." After months of this he resigned and joined Pan American Air Ferries in the United States, ferrying all types of planes across the Atlantic. When the army took over, he joined the TWA, flying four-engine transports to England and Africa. In June, 1943, he was commissioned Captain in the United States Air Forces.

AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND



ROUTES OVER THE WORLD



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